

THE YOUNG COMMANDER



BY CAPTAIN ARMSTRONG

NOVELS AT TWO SHILLINGS.

BY LORD LYTTON.



JAMES H. GRAFF,
BALTIMORE

N. 2407

BY HENRY COCKTON.

Valentine Vox.

| Stanley Thorn.

| George Julian.

Published by George Routledge and Sons.

Novels at Two Shillings.—*Continued.*

BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

The Night Side of Nature.

Mrs. Crowe.

Emily Chester.

Phineas Quiddy.

Scottish Chiefs.

Fane Porter.

Lewell Pastures.

Rory O'More.

Samuel Lover.

Gilderoy.

Who is to Have i

Feathered Arrow.

Each for Himself.

Sir Roland Ashton

The Young Curat

Matrimonial Ship

The Two Barone

Lady

Country Curate.

Handy Andy.

Lamplighter.

Gideon Giles.

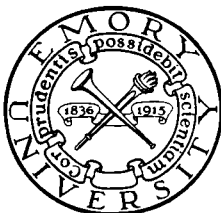
Ben Brace.

The Hussar.

Guy Livingstone

Running the Ga

ROBERT W. WOODRUFF
LIBRARY



Kissing the Rod. *Admiral Bates.*

Sir Victor's Choice.

Annie Thomas.

The Two Midshipmen.

Captain Armstrong.

Outward Bound.

Author of "Rattlin the Reefer."

The Secret of a Life. *M. M. Bell.*

The Pirate of the Mediterranean.

Kingston.

False Colours. *Annie Thomas.*

Will He Marry Her. *John Lang.*

The Ex-Wife. *John Lang.*

The First Lieutenant's Story.

Lady C. Long.

d.

Patten Saunders.

French Police Spy.

itchman.

we. *Richardson.*

st. *Hesba Stretton.*

Courtship.

of Money.

A. B. Edwards.

g Jew.

of Paris.

d.

ague of Life.

oods.

ry.

heels.

Lever.

y. *Lever.*

RAILWAY LIBRARY.

Price 2s. 6d. each.

The Clockmaker.

Sam Slick.

The Vicomte de Bragelonne. 2

vols.

Dumas.

NEW SHILLING VOLUMES.

Routledge's Readings (Comic).

Routledge's Readings (Serious).

Routledge's Readings (Dramatic).

The Book of Modern Scotch

Anecdotes.

The Book of Modern Irish Anec-

dots.

The Book of Modern English

Anecdotes.

Published by George Routledge and Sons.

Novels at Two Shillings.—*Continued.*

BY AUTHOR OF "WHITEFRIARS."

Whitehall. | Owen Tudor. | Cæsar Borgia. | Whitefriars.

BY FIELDING AND SMOLLETT.

FIELDING.
Tom Jones.
Joseph Andrews.
Amelia.

SMOLLETT.
Roderick Random.
Humphrey Clinker.
Peregrine Pickle.

BY W. H. MAXWELL.

Luck is Everything.
Stories of Waterloo.
Captain Blake.
The Bivouac.
Flood and Field.

Wild Sports in the West.
Hector O'Halloran.
Stories of the Peninsular War.

Captain O'Sullivan.
Wild Sports and Adventures in the Highlands.

BY THEODORE HOOK.

Gilbert Gurney.
The Parson's Daughter.
All in the Wrong.
Fathers and Sons.
Gervase Skinner.

Cousin William.
Man of Many Friends.
Passion and Principle.
The Widow and the Marquess.
Gurney Married.

Jack Brag.
Maxwell.
Cousin Geoffry.
Merton.
Peregrine Bunce.

BY G. P. R. JAMES.

Agincourt.
Arabella Stuart.
Arrah Neil.
Attila.
Beauchamp.
The Black Eagle.
The Brigand.
Castelneau.
The Castle of Ehrenstein.
Charles Tyrrell.
The Convict.
Darnley.
Delaware.
De L'Orme.
The False Heir.

Forest Days; or, Robin Hood.
The Forgery.
The Gentleman of the Old School.
The Gipsy.
Gowrie; or, The King's Plot.
Heidelberg.
Henry Masterton.
Henry of Guise.
The Jacquerie.
John Marston Hall.
The King's Highway.
Leonora D'Orco.
Morley Ernstein.
My Aunt Pontypool.

The Man-at-Arms.
Mary of Burgundy.
The Old Dominion.
One in a Thousand.
Philip Augustus.
Richelieu.
The Robber.
Rose D'Albret.
Russell.
Sir Theodore Broughton.
The Smuggler.
The Stepmother.
A Whim and Its Consequences.
The Woodman.

Published by George Routledge and Sons.

THE
YOUNG COMMANDER.

LONDON :
WYMAN AND SONS, PRINTERS, GREAT QUEEN STREET,
LINCOLN'S-INN FIELDS, W.C.

THE
YOUNG COMMANDER

A NOVEL

BY
CAPTAIN ARMSTRONG

AUTHOR OF "THE TWO MIDSHIPMEN," "THE WARHAWK," "THE MEDORA,"
ETC. ETC.

LONDON
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS
THE BROADWAY, LUDGATE
NEW YORK 416 BROOME STREET

THE YOUNG COMMANDER.

CHAPTER I.

TOWARDS the close of the eighteenth century, on the banks of the romantic river Fal, stood a very handsome mansion, of no great antiquity, though built in the style of the residences of the days of "Good Queen Bess."

It had been erected by Sir Hector Claude Tregannon, in the latter end of the reign of George the First, and at the opening of our story was inhabited by Sir Hector's grandson, Sir Henry Claude Tregannon, the fifth baronet.

The grounds surrounding the house were remarkably beautiful and extensive, though the prospect from the windows was somewhat circumscribed, the thickly wooded hills on the opposite side of the Fal obstructing the view. To the rear of the mansion, the land was plentifully covered with timber of luxuriant growth and foliage. In front, a beautiful and extensive lawn led to the high rocky banks of the Fal. This stream, which gives its name to the town and harbour of Falmouth, was not a quarter of a mile broad opposite Tregannon House, but the banks on both sides of the river were exceedingly picturesque and beautiful, winding up between lofty hills covered with wood, till its navigation ended at the town of Truro.

On the opposite side of the river, facing Tregannon House, the country, for several miles, was very thinly inhabited, and at the period of our story the nature of the land was extremely wild, thickly covered with timber and low shrubs, with abrupt cliffs, and shallow narrow creeks intersecting it. Below Tregannon House the river Fal emptied itself into a large sheet of water, forming one of the great branches of Falmouth harbour, having

St. Just's Creek to the south, Milor Creek to the north, and Carrick Roads, (where all the men-of-war anchored,) to the west, with the town of Falmouth, Pendennis Hill and Castle, forming, altogether, a very beautiful panorama.

The month of May had commenced, and sweet and refreshing as the name of that beautiful month is, yet, in the variable climate of Cornwall, May oftentimes assumes the aspect of March. However, on the day our story opens, it chanced to be remarkably balmy and pleasant; the sun shone out bright and cheerful, the light westerly wind playing on the waters of the Fal, causing them to sparkle and ripple under its rays, in a manner tempting the beholder to embark on its gently flowing tide. The full light fell upon Tregannon House, its noble proportions shewing clearly and well defined, opposed to the dark foliage of the thick wood that covered the hill at the back.

The giant shadows of the great old oaks that bordered the lawn added to the pleasing effect, while rows of beautiful evergreens and flowering shrubs bordered the winding walks that were cut round the lawn, down to the very water's edge.

About two o'clock on the day named, the front door of the mansion was thrown open, and two females, with three children came forth, and descending the flight of steps, began traversing the lawn, in the direction of the river, whose waters, seen through the vista of trees sparkling and glistening in the sun-light, enticed a nearer approach.

The three children, once on the grass, ran on before the two females, with all the delight and joyous movements of young people emancipated from restraint. Two of them were girls of seven and nine years of age, the third was a lovely boy, scarcely three. The two females, their attendants, both young women, went on, chatting and laughing, permitting the children to ramble and wander whither they pleased, chasing the early butterfly, tempted abroad by the beauty and warmth of the bright May day.

Crouched behind a thick mass of furze, that stretched along the summit of the bank overhanging the river, were two persons, a male and female, who were eagerly watching the children through an opening in the furze brake.

The man who lay thus concealed was perhaps about

thirty years of age. He might have been accounted at one time remarkably handsome; but, at this period, his haggard, wild look was almost ferocious, as his dark eyes and bushy eyebrows were bent with a fearfully sinister expression upon the three children. Even at his early age there were deep lines beneath the eyes and round the corners of the mouth, making it very evident that his short life had been passed in vice and dissipation of every sort, for, at a careful glance, it might be discerned, that he was prematurely old. That he had once been a strong, powerful man was evident, from his breadth of shoulder and chest, but now he was thin, almost emaciated. His garments formerly those of a gentleman, were threadbare, patched and torn in many places. So much for the man who plays no inconsiderable part in this our true story!

The woman by his side was his wife, three years younger; she had once been singularly handsome, but when introduced to the notice of our readers, was a wretched object to behold. This woman, at five-and-twenty, was a confirmed drunkard. Gin, the bane of the human race, was all she cared for. She was miserably attired; a fragment of an old shawl only partly covered her shoulders, and a dirty, torn straw bonnet her head, while the tresses of a once very fine head of hair hung disordered and uncombed over her neck and person.

Such were the two persons concealed behind the furze, watching the movements of the children.

The two servants turned into a shady walk, while the little girls, laughing and shouting, chased their brother on towards the very spot where the strangers lay concealed.

"Up, Jane, up," said the man, in a low voice to the woman; "now or never!" and with a savage oath, he muttered—"Ah! curse him! I will strike him a blow now he will never recover. Go, woman, crawl down the bank—loosen the boat—I am certain of succeeding this time."

"So you said ten days ago," muttered the woman, as she rose, and, with a discontented look, disappeared down the bank.

"Ah!" muttered the man, looking after her with a fierce expression of countenance, "if she had a gin bottle with her she would not grumble; a few more bottles of

that cursed alcohol will finish her. Who would have thought it?"

In the meantime, the children reached to within fifty yards of the man's hiding-place—the two attendants being at a considerable distance.

"Now, Claude," said the eldest girl, "we will have a game of hide and seek."

The man heard those words, and a low chuckle of satisfaction escaped him.

"There, Claude," continued the two girls, placing the little fellow behind a thick, low laurestina; "stay there, and mind, don't look till we hide, and cry, 'Claude?'"

And away they went, laughing and running along between the thick flowery shrubs, till they found a place to their satisfaction to hide in.

The child—and a sweet, lovely child he was—tried to make a place in the bushes to peep through, and, as he did so, like a deadly snake, the man crawled forth from his cover, with a thick sack in his hands, and the next instant it was over the poor child's head, and a grasp fixed on its little throat, that not only stifled all attempts at a scream, but also almost extinguished life. He darted down the bank, just as the shrill cry of "Claude!" rang through the air.

In three minutes the man reached the river's side, where floated a small punt, crazy and old. Into this he got, still holding the half-strangled child.

"Hold him tight, Jane," said the man, handing over the sack with the child to the woman; "not too tight, curse you—do you want to strangle him?"

"Oh!" muttered the woman, with a vile sneer, "he is not to be disposed of, then? and I am to have the trouble."

"Hold your tongue, fool," growled the man, while he sculled the punt rapidly down under the bank, with a falling tide.

A sudden bend in the stream soon hid them from the sight of Tregannon House, and just then a wild cry of alarm rang through the air, and was echoed from the opposite side.

"Ah! shriek away," exultingly exclaimed the man, urging the boat towards a narrow muddy creek on the other side of the river. Into this he pushed, and then both he and the woman leaped out.

The man, fastening the punt to a stake, pulled out a plug, and pressing it down, it filled and sank.

"Come, walk fast," he exclaimed, "and give me the boy."

"I think he's dead, James," said the woman, quite unconcernedly.

"No," said the man, "he's not dead, but you have half-stifled him."

"So much the better," returned the woman, "It will hinder him from crying till we get to the cave."

This part of the land bordering the river was totally uncultivated and uninhabited, and covered with a wild plantation of stunted oak and low brush-wood, the nearest village, St. Just, being some four miles distant. The poor child was only exhausted, for as the man took him in his arms he began to struggle again; but his cries, before stifled, were now deep, painful sobs.

Forcing their way through the many obstructions in their path, in about ten minutes they reached the base of a steep cliff, a deserted quarry apparently, for a large deep pool of water, with very steep banks, lay at the foot of it. Thrusting aside a thick tuft of brambles and bushes growing out from the side of the cliff, a narrow opening appeared, very probably a deserted and abandoned mine-shaft. Into this they entered. Within, it was wide and spacious, and had the appearance of a large cave.

"Now, hold this boy," said the man, "till I strike a light."

The woman took the unfortunate child from the sack. Its violent sobs and tears would have softened any other woman's heart, save that of an habitual drunkard's, but they—they possess no heart but for gin. She shook the child roughly, and in a harsh voice threatened to kill it, if it did not cease crying. In the meantime the man struck a light and then advanced into the cave. It was evidently their place of abode, for various utensils were lying about, a fireplace of stones was erected, heaps of dried fern and rushes were gathered together in one corner, and a large piece of beef and some dried fish were suspended by a string to a peg driven into a fissure in the side of the rock.

"There, put the child down, Jane," said the man, "he will cry himself to sleep." At all events, he may cry till

he chokes. No one will hear him here. Light a fire, and let us have something to eat, and here's a cup of gin for you to begin with."

Taking a large bottle and a cup from a hole, he poured out a draught, which he gave the woman, who drank it off eagerly. With a contemptuous and sneering look, the man regarded the thin worn-out wretch before him, and then drank a cup-full himself. Taking some dried wood heaped up in the cave, the woman soon lighted a fire, while the man cut slices of beef. A pot of potatoes was put on the fire, and then both sat down to wait till they were boiled. The poor boy, worn out with struggling and crying, sat up on the fern gazing with his large dark eyes upon the wretches before him, as if fascinated by some strange power.

"Well," said the woman, "now this job is done, what do you intend to do with the brat? It won't do to travel with him, we should be detected at once."

"Do not trouble yourself, Jane," said the man; "my work is not half done. George and his wife will be back to-morrow; you will have no trouble with the boy."

"But he will always stand in our way; even if you succeed, you will always live in terror."

"I will not take a life needlessly," gloomily replied the man. "If I succeed, I will take care the boy never appears again. If I fail, he will be of immense importance to us, and make up for the failure. But talk no more on this subject now, for you cannot guess how things may turn out."

They shortly afterwards ate their meal, and even tried to get the wretched boy also to eat something, but with a passionate gesture he pushed it away, calling out bitterly for his father and his sisters to take him away from those bad people. The woman laughed in mockery, and turned away, consoling herself with the contents of the black bottle, her husband making no opposition, but not taking more himself than another cup-full, diluted with water.

"You will get drunk, Jane," said the man, looking at her thin, emaciated face. "If you do, during my absence, you will ruin all."

"Ah!" said the woman, with a heavy sigh, "it's only then I enjoy a moment's happiness—I forget the past."

"Tut, girl," interrupted the man, "*forget the past*, and look to the future; it's far pleasanter."

The woman shuddered, and did not reply; but she sat with her head buried in her two hands; the man got up and went to the mouth of the cave. It was a dark night, and a light grey mist came up from the river. He then retired within the cave. The child was asleep, and the woman still in the same attitude. The man looked at her for a moment by the light of the miserable candle; some passing thought crossed his mind, for the fierce, harsh expression of his features softened, and he drew his tall and well-formed figure upright; but the next moment his dark brows met, and he muttered—

“It must be—I have sworn it”

He stooped down and seized the gin bottle.

The woman stirred not. He turned it so as to let it lie over on its side, till the liquor ran out upon the ground

Lighting another candle, he walked quietly from the cave, leaving both the woman and the child sleeping. Pushing away the mass of brambles from the mouth, he emerged into the open air. It was a mild, beautiful night, with a clear, blue sky above; but a grey mist still lay, as it were, sleeping upon the earth. As he moved quietly through the wood, the sound of a bell came clearly and distinctly to his ear. He counted the strokes; the sound came from some man-of-war in St. Just's Pool.

“Eleven o'clock!” muttered the man; “the tide will reach the punt in half-an-hour;” and he moved on faster.

It was not a very easy task to find the path through that entangled wood, but the man pursued his way steadily till he reached the creek. The punt was lying dry on the mud. Lifting it up, he let the water run out, and then put in the plug. By this time, the young flood-tide was running up the creek, and, as the punt required but little water to float it, the man got in, and with the single oar previously fastened in her, sculled out of the creek into the tide.

The mist lay thickly over the river, but the tide ran up strong. He let the boat float up with the stream, and listened attentively to catch any sound, but all was still and calm save that man's heart, which then beat with every vile passion that can have a place in the human breast. Having reached the opposite side, at nearly the same place from which he had carried off the child, he pushed the boat

ashore, and, taking the long rope fastened to the bow, ascended the bank, and then made fast the cord to a bush. Again he listened, but not a sound was to be heard, save the sighing of the breeze through the lofty trees, or the ripple of the tide against the rocky shores of the Fal. Making his way along the bank, which was no easy task, he arrived at the spot where the unfortunate child had been playing so thoughtlessly and merrily in the morning.

He stood by the very tree, and gazed up at the house, but all was dark there. Not a single light was to be seen at any of the windows. He then sat down, and began to commune within himself, thus—

“After the occurrence of this morning there will be some of the servants up to a late hour. Many may not go to bed at all. *He* will not, I feel satisfied. His heart tortured, his brain on fire, will his poisons give him relief now? My time has come, though I have gone through eight long years of misery and degradation—have leagued with the very scum of the earth—”

He paused in his thoughts, passed his broad, thin hand across his brow, and then leaned back against the tree; and thus he sat till the hour of two, for he heard some clock within the mansion strike distinctly. He had approached very close to the front of the building.

“I must be cautious,” he muttered. “He may have procured constables from Truro.”

Then creeping forward amid the evergreens, he gained a view of the back of the mansion. There were neither stables nor out-houses near the building, but the grounds were formed into shrubberies and gardens, the latter being walled in.

No lights were to be seen, neither was there any sound of life, not even the bark of a dog. This latter sound he knew from experience he would be sure not to hear; satisfied that all was quiet, and that the inhabitants of the mansion were seemingly buried in repose after the, no doubt, terrible excitement of the day, he crept back to the east wing, and then climbing over an ornamental fence, passed across a flower border and reached the side of the building. He halted at the foot of a magnificent pear tree, which some years back had been trained to cover that side of the house, but growing too strong and large to be confined within

bounds it was allowed its liberty. It was a noble tree, and some of its branches still touched the wall, resting against it for support.

Some thirty or more feet from the ground was a window, and up at this window the man beneath gazed anxiously, and then muttered—

“Yes, just as I hoped and wished.” Then buttoning his threadbare coat tightly about him, and leaving his rimless hat on the ground, he began slowly but steadily to mount the tree. Thin and emaciated as he appeared, he was still a strong and active man; with ease he climbed till he reached a stout branch that rested nearly against the strong stone buttress of the window.

“Now then,” soliloquized this daring robber, for such he might be justly called, “if the window be not fastened my task will be easy. If it be, I must incur the risk.”

Standing on the branch, which bent considerably with his weight, he was able to place his hand on the stone buttress to steady himself. He then drew from beneath his coat a long and strong sharp-pointed knife with the blade in a leather case. Inserting this under the sash, he at once ascertained that the window was not fastened inside. Getting then a better and higher position, he leaned cautiously forward and was able to place his hands so as to open the window; then with a little exertion, he raised himself up and got within the room without making the least noise. For several moments he paused and listened, but not a sound was to be heard in the house. The beating of his own heart was almost audible, for even with his most perfect knowledge of the mansion he had thus so easily gained an entrance into, the project he meditated was most daring and hazardous. But this man was one who at that moment valued life only as a secondary consideration. Taking off his shoes, he leaned against the wall of the room, muttering to himself—“Eight years; yes, nearly ten years since I stood within this room. This is not my first entrance by this window, but it will be the last, I feel sure.”

For several minutes he remained trying to gain a view over the large chamber he had thus clandestinely entered. It was a kind of lumber-room containing all manner of articles; some of which might puzzle a clever head in thinking what they could have been used for. The room

was full, but the faint light from the window threw a strange shadowy form on some of the objects. Divested of his shoes, he picked his way through the lumber and gained the door. It was, as he expected, locked, but he seemed quite prepared for all kinds of emergencies, and taking from his pocket a bunch of very singularly-looking skeleton keys, in less than a minute the door was unlocked, and having oiled the hinges with a feather which he drew from a small bottle of oil, it opened without the least noise.

Standing without the door, he listened eagerly for a few minutes, but all was still as death in that vast mansion. He was now in one wing of the house, and he had a long way to ramble through the building to gain the principal and usually inhabited parts. Scarcely a ray of light penetrated the long corridor he was traversing, but every inch was familiar to him, and he passed noiselessly along, up and down stairs, along galleries, opening and shutting doors, and avoiding all those parts which he knew were formerly occupied by servants. Without impediment the intruder gained the grand staircase, and then the principal corridor where the best sleeping chambers were. In this part of the mansion none of the domestics reposed, except the Baronet's own man, who slept in a room at a short distance from his master's. A communication existed by bell between the Baronet's chamber and his attendant's, for sometimes the former would sit up whole nights, and often ring for the latter's services. Approaching the Baronet's door, the man paused, and placing his eye to the keyhole saw that there was a light within, but no sound of human life came to his ear, and he again listened for a minute or two, then laying his hand on the lock, he gently turned it. It yielded noiselessly to his touch; he opened the door and fearlessly entered the apartment. He felt he was deadly pale, but his hand did not shake or his purpose falter.

It was a very large, lofty chamber with three windows, and contained one of those immense ponderous beds, with four posts, so heavy and cumbrous in their appearance, and yet withal so grand and imposing to look at. The whole room was furnished in the magnificent but heavy style of George the Second's time, though the period of our tale is about the latter end of the reign of his successor

Opposite the bed was the fire-place, with a very pure white marble mantel-piece. In the grate, although it was the month of May, there burned a sea-coal fire; at some little distance from the fire was an immense easy-stuffed chair, and in this chair, reclining back, reposed the strange, eccentric, but noble-hearted Sir Henry Claude Tregannon, attired in deep mourning, with the frills and ruffles of the period.

He was a man rather above the middle height, but extremely thin; his features were beautiful, remarkably so, though the face was deadly pale, but the eyes being closed, the general expression could not then be judged of. His head was quite bald, excepting a circle of hair round the back, and that was jet black. One thin white transparent hand rested on the arm of the chair, near to which stood a large table, on which was placed a costly medicine chest, two curious decanters, Venetian cut wine-glasses, and a splendid gold watch set round with jewels, a minute glass and a purse full of gold, the bright metal shining out through the open network; a desk with writing materials, and a brace of beautifully finished pistols, on which a bronze lamp of great antiquity, with a dark shade over the flame, cast a strong light, whilst the rest of the chamber was in comparative obscurity. In a splendid frame over the mantel-piece, was the full-length portrait of a very lovely boy, apparently about two or three years of age. A sinister smile passed over the intruders' face as his eyes rested on that picture, and he mentally exclaimed—"The blow has struck home." He then advanced close to the table, and looked at a cut-glass phial that stood beside a wine-glass half full of wine. It was labelled laudanum. Another, similar phial was by its side, on which was written "prussic acid." "Humph!" muttered the man, "still dabbling with his poisons!"

Sir Henry uttered a low moan, and moved uneasily.

"Ah! he sleeps from the effect of opium," thought the man. He paused, his eyes resting on the watch and the gold in the purse, but all poverty stricken as he looked he neither touched the one nor the other. Even the dressing-table covered with silver utensils and ornaments did not attract a glance, but taking up the phial of prussic acid, he paused a moment in thought, and then took out the

curious stopper, and poured into the wine in the glass, quite enough to kill a horse on the instant, and then replaced the stopper.

During this proceeding, the Baronet several times moved and moaned, though his eyes remained fast closed; whilst at each movement the man's hand grasped the handle of his long knife. He next approached the desk, and taking a pen, thought, for a moment, before writing four or five lines in a steady, bold hand, putting at the bottom his name. This paper he placed upon the table, so that, on waking, the Baronet should instantly perceive it. He then retired behind the high back of the great arm-chair, first placing his cold clammy hand on the head of the uneasy sleeping Baronet.

A shudder, like an attack of ague, seemed to shake the form of Sir Henry, then his eyes unclosed, and he wildly looked around him.

The paper seemed to catch his attention at once, for he grasped it with a violent, nervous eagerness, and read the lines. The effect appeared appalling—he gasped for breath—trembled in every limb—and with a sudden spasmodic action, seized the glass of wine and swallowed it, as if to relieve himself from fainting. But the instant the wine passed his lips, with its deadly mixture, he gave a wild and fearful shriek, and would have seized the bell-rope, but a hand held him down in his chair. The next instant he was a corpse.

Seizing the paper from the hand of the dead man, the murderer thrust it crumpled into his breast pocket, and instantly fled from the room. As he did so, he heard a door in the corridor open, but he fled swiftly, and, in a few minutes, reached the chamber through which he had entered the house.

Locking the lumber-room door, he resumed his shoes, muttering—

“I did not count upon that fearful shriek; I thought the poison too deadly for even a murmur to escape his lips. Ha! by heavens, there goes a bell—there is not a moment to lose.”

Getting out of the window, he dropt on the bough, and, in an instant, gained the foot of the tree, having first carefully closed the window. Picking up his hat, he ran down

amongst the evergreens, and gaining the furze brake, lay down to recover breath. Scarcely five minutes had elapsed, and then he heard the gallop of a horse down the broad avenue leading to the principal gate.

"Good!" muttered the murderer, "they are expeditious. Shews he kept up the old custom—a horse saddled, and a groom ready, throughout the night, to mount at an instant's warning. But all the doctors breathing may look wise, and try their skill. He is gone."

And, with a terrible laugh, he sprang down the bank, cast off the rope, and entering the punt, let it drop down the river with the falling tide.

CHAPTER II.

At the period of our tale there resided in a handsome house, on the marine parade at Plymouth, a Mr. Stonehenge, an attorney-at-law. This gentleman had considerable practice, though not always considerable emolument, in a certain branch of his profession, and was generally remarkably fortunate in all the cases he undertook, hence arose the idea of his talent. Fortunate or clever, these two words—how different in their real signification—sometimes, however, mean the same thing—at least, most part of the human race are inclined to believe that every man successful and fortunate, must be also exceedingly clever, and the possessor of considerable abilities.

Mr. Stonehenge's chief practice lay in our criminal law courts, and always on the part of the criminal or the prosecuted. No matter how deep the guilt of the prisoner—no matter how apparent his crime—Mr. Stonehenge was always ready to defend him, and whether fortunate or clever, it matters not, he more frequently gained his cause than otherwise. Indeed, having succeeded in some rather remarkable criminal cases, he acquired no small degree of fame.

Mr. Stonehenge was not considered a bad kind of man, though he was known to be rather greedy of gain, and having risen from a very low grade, into the position he

then held, he was ambitious of rising still higher, and would not, it was thought, be very particular as to the means employed to gain his ends.

Still he was outwardly a very merry, good-natured man amongst his own family, and very fond of his wife and two daughters.

We introduce him to the notice of our readers, some ten or twelve days after the events recorded in our first chapter; he was sitting at breakfast, with his wife and two daughters, both extremely good-looking girls, respectively of fifteen and eighteen years of age.

Mr. Stonehenge himself was about the middle height, but very stout, with a round full face, light hair, and a pair of sharp, quick, grey eyes; he was very neat in his person and attire.

Mrs Stonehenge was rather tall and thin, but with a quiet, agreeable countenance; dressed well, but not beyond her station or means.

The room the party was breakfasting in was a parlour, with a large bow window, looking out on the fair and beautiful bay of Plymouth, with Mount Edgecumbe on the right, and to the left the Start Point. The breakwater did not then exist. The bay was covered with shipping, from the stately two-decker to the tanned sailed barge.

Mr Stonehenge had just finished two eggs, a round of toast, and a few slices of ham, and feeling correspondingly comfortable, and not being pressed for time, he cast a glance out of the window, and said—

“Now Rosa, my love, hand me the *Falmouth Packet*, and I will read you the news.”

“La, pa,” said Miss Rosa, handing the paper, “there is never anything in that paper but shipping intelligence, and mines discovered, and polytechnic meetings, &c. I never read it.”

“There you are wrong,” returned the father, “*The Packet* is the best local paper in the two counties. I suppose you want a paper full of the fashions, balls, picnics, and a goodly sprinkling of horrible murders.”

“Certainly not the last, papa,” returned Rosa.

“I think, my dear,” said her mother, with a smile, and a knowing look at her husband, “the last named-intelligence would suit you best.”

"God bless my soul!" suddenly exclaimed the attorney, "here's a most strange and melancholy piece of information! I know all the parties well."

"What is it?" demanded wife and daughter, in one breath.

"Nothing less than the death of Sir Henry Claude Tregannon, by taking an overdose of prussic acid."

"Prussic acid!" exclaimed Mrs. Stonehenge. "Good God, that is poison! What could induce a man to take that for a dose?"

"Ah! he was a strange, eccentric man," said the attorney. "It seems his only son and heir was supposed to be drowned in the Fal; but I will read you the paragraph—it is rather long, but it fully explains this extraordinary affair, as far as it can be explained. I will tell you about the deceased baronet afterwards."

With a loud "Ahem!" the attorney then read as follows:—

"It is with exceeding regret that we have to record the sudden death of Sir Henry Claude Tregannon, Baronet. This melancholy and most unexpected event occurred on the night after the extraordinary disappearance of the young heir of Tregannon. The unfortunate child, it is supposed, fell into the river, at the bottom of Tregannon lawn, whilst running to hide from his sisters; whether such is the case or not, it is at present impossible to say. The Baronet, it appears, retired to his chamber about one o'clock in the morning, after spending many hours with his attendants, in vainly searching for his lost child, by land and by water. We now quote the account of the Baronet's death, given by Mr. Phillips, the deceased's personal attendant, in his examination before the coroner.

"The late Sir Henry suffered from a very severe and troublesome cough. To relieve this, he took prussic acid, of course in very minute doses. He also frequently took opium to induce sleep, and oftentimes sat up all night, suffering less in that position from his cough than while lying down.

"That night Sir Henry retired to his room in a terribly distressed state of mind, declined going to bed, and dismissed Mr. Philips, saying he would summon him if he required anything.

"The Baronet's attendant slept in the same corridor, and a bell communicated from his master's room.

"Mr. Philips added—

"He retired to bed about half-past one, but did not undress. Merely threw off his coat, and lay down; for he felt distressed at seeing Sir Henry suffer so. He was not certain whether he fell asleep or not. He might have been dosing, when a most piercing shriek caused him to leap, stupified from his bed. He paused a moment, and then snatching up the night-lamp that always burned in his room, rushed out into the corridor, and proceeded to his master's door. The two young ladies and their governess slept in the same corridor—they also heard the shriek, and hastily dressing, came out pale and terrified. Miss Pritchard, the governess, said the shriek came from the Baronet's room. Mr. Philips then opened the chamber door and entered. All was perfectly still, the lamp was burning on the table, and nothing seemed disturbed; but on advancing to the chair, he beheld his master lying back against it. He uttered a cry of alarm, for he saw at once that Sir Henry Tregannon was dead. Miss Pritchard pulled the bell frantically, hurried the two appalled children back to their room, and then fainted. Mr. Philips ordered one of the terrified servants, who came up half-dressed, to run to the stables, and direct the groom to mount and ride with the greatest possible speed to Truro for the family physician, although he knew life was quite extinct. Till his arrival, he ordered the door to be closed, and nothing to be touched.

"In less than two hours Doctor Plumtree arrived; of course all he could say on the subject was, that Sir Henry Claude Tregannon died from an over dose of prussic acid, which, no doubt, the unfortunate Baronet took by mistake, during a state of excessive excitement of mind, arising partly from a naturally nervous temperament and great distraction of mind from the loss of his only son. The verdict of the coroner's jury was therefore to that effect."

After reading this long paragraph, Mr. Stonehenge put down the paper, and looked remarkably thoughtful.

"What a vastly melancholy affair altogether," said Mrs. Stonehenge. "Father and son both dead, at least

they suppose the poor child is drowned. What else could have become of him?"

"He might mamma," said the youngest daughter, "be stolen by gipsies for the sake of his clothes, or for the purpose of gaining a large reward afterwards."

"But," said Mrs. Stonehenge to her husband, who seemed to be in a reverie, "who succeeds to the great property of Tregannon? The daughters cannot inherit the estate, for I heard you say that some time ago, and something is running in my head about some person or other you once got acquitted for some crime, whose name was Tregannon, or very like it."

"By Jove, you are right, Mary—quite right; I was thinking of that very individual, and most extraordinary to say, that very man who stood in the dock at Bodmin, within an ace of being condemned to death as a forger, is now, if the child is dead, unquestionably the next in succession to the title and estate of Tregannon, a rental of full fourteen thousand pounds a year."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed the young ladies, "a forger become a baronet! How horrible!"

"You forget, my dears," said the attorney, rather seriously, "he was acquitted, and therefore innocent."

"But," said Mrs. Stonehenge, "I remember you said at the time, you only saved him through some informality, or quibble, or something."

"It does not signify," returned Mr. Stonehenge, a little sharply, "what it was; the law declared him not guilty, therefore he has a right to be considered an innocent man."

"I know you are quite right, my dear," said Mrs. Stonehenge, meekly. "I never heard the whole affair."

"Do, papa, if you have time, tell us all about it, and what kind of man the late Sir Henry was—we have heard such strange things said of him."

"Well, I do not mind indulging you," said the attorney, who always enjoyed, to a certain degree, the pleasure of hearing himself talk. "Sir Henry Claude Tregannon and his brother James Walpole were twin children; but the late Sir Henry had the good fortune to get the start of his brother into this world, full two minutes. This lucky advance into life constituted him the heir of the Tregannon

estate. Now, though he was the first-born, it did not turn out that he was the strongest. On the contrary, he was, though a singularly handsome child, weak and puny, while his brother James was a strong, lusty boy. And as they were born, so they grew up. The late Sir Henry was about four-and-twenty when he succeeded to the title and property. His brother was in the army, and said to be a most extravagant, dissipated young man, who, in few years, spent a large fortune, and then married a woman much beneath him. Sir Henry was a remarkably studious and retiring man, fond of chemistry to excess, exceedingly nervous, and took to dosing himself and dabbling in poisons. At the age of thirty or so he married a young lady, highly connected, with a large fortune, which was, I understood, settled upon any progeny they might have. Though Sir Henry was of a weak, delicate frame, still, as I said, his features were beautiful, and his person, though slight, remarkably elegant. I speak from my own observation, for I not only saw him during the trial of James Tregannon, but several times after.

“His first child, a boy, died in infancy. This irritated him, for he longed for an heir, as the estate of Tregannon was strictly entailed. His second child was a girl. About this period, I believe it was, that he was bitten by a mad dog—at least, they said it was mad—and it was shot before they clearly ascertained whether it was afflicted with hydrophobia. Thus the Baronet remained under the impression that he had been bitten by a rabid animal, which affected his already nervous temperament, and made him infinitely worse. He was greatly beloved by his numerous tenantry, and by all those about him, being exceedingly humane and kind hearted. He took an invincible dislike to all dogs, and consequently they were all banished from his immediate vicinity.

“A strange fatality seemed to hang over the Baronet and his family. His wife and brother died nearly at the same period—the latter leaving an orphan boy, about fourteen years of age, totally unprovided for. Sir Henry sent for the boy, and installed him at Tregannon. I can tell you nothing about him at that time, except from vague reports. I only know from the man himself, that his uncle sent him to a public school in England, and that he returned to Tregannon at the age of eighteen. Just before this, the

Baronet received into his establishment a young lady, the orphan daughter of a Cornish clergyman, with whom he had formerly been very intimate, both at Oxford and afterwards. She was said to be a very beautiful, talented, and accomplished girl. She became the governess of Miss Tregannon. James Tregannon, at the age of twenty, was accounted a handsome man, and was tall and strongly built. I first heard of him as being concerned in some swindling transaction at the races at Exeter. I was there, but the case was hushed up. He kept race-horses unknown to his uncle, betted and played high, frequented low places, kept depraved society, and was enormously in debt; but being considered his uncle's heir, he succeeded in pacifying his creditors.

"I believe it was about this time that he actually married a young woman of specious appearance, but of a notoriously bad character. At last, his uncle found out his pursuits, and the mad act he had committed, and also ascertained that his debts were immense. He at once told him he must go abroad.

"James Tregannon did not inform me of all the particulars of this interview; but he said it was a stormy one, and that he accused his uncle of retaining the really amiable Miss Temple as his mistress, which gross and false accusation drove the Baronet wild, and induced him to do at once, what he really wished to do before, and this was to offer his hand to Miss Temple. He banished his nephew from Tregannon, allowing him a handsome annuity as long as he conducted himself well, and immediately afterwards married Miss Temple. Again the Baronet became a father, and again a girl was born. It was at this time that James Tregannon committed two forgeries, one for six thousand pounds, and the other for two thousand, forging his uncle's name to two separate cheques, in each instance obtaining the money. On the point of embarking with his wife for America, he was arrested with nearly the whole sum on his person in drafts or cheques upon the mercantile houses in New York. He was finally lodged in Bodmin Jail, to stand his trial at the assizes. I undertook his defence. His uncle, the Baronet, was resolved not to be turned from his stern purpose, as he had acknowledged that the bills and cheques were forgeries. It was said, and I believe such a report was founded in fact, that Sir Henry,

who had immense interest in a high quarter, intended to get his nephew's sentence of death (for there is no doubt but that he would have been condemned) changed into transportation, seeing it was utterly hopeless to look for a change in his terrible career. Of course I had many interviews with this strange man, who seemed not at all to feel his awful situation, for at that time I saw no hopes of saving him. So far, his uncle, however, acted fairly; for he left him ample funds to pay the expenses of his defence.

"I found, by his own confession, there were many other charges against him besides the forgeries, but they were not brought forward, I suppose, seeing that the charge against him was too palpable to be got over. Through an extraordinary blunder in the indictment, and which I eagerly took advantage of, James Tregannon was acquitted, and before others could arrest him, he disappeared, and from that time to this I have heard nothing of him. I was, however, amply remunerated, and acquired considerable credit for the discovery of the blunder of the prosecuting attorney.

"With respect to Sir Henry, I only know from report that he lived most happily with the amiable woman he had married. She bore him three children, two girls and a boy, but unhappily died in giving birth to the latter. This blow completely shattered the nerves and constitution of the Baronet. And thus, girls, the case stands. Now, Rosa, there's a capital beginning for a novel—eh!"

"Yes," returned Miss Rose, "provided you made out that the child had been stolen by his bad cousin, James Tregannon, and that he came to his rights again."

Mr. Stonehenge gave a slight start, looked into the serious face of his daughter, and then said—

"Very strange!" He then got up, and went down to his office.

"Well, all this is a very melancholy and strange affair," said Mrs. Stonehenge to her daughters. "I should not at all wonder but that this James Tregannon will again show himself, when he hears of his uncle's death, and the loss of the heir."

"But father said," remarked the elder girl, "that there were other serious charges against him."

"Fourteen thousand a year, my dear," said Mrs.

Stonehenge, with a smile, "will have a very soothing effect with creditors."

"Well, for my part," said Rosa, who was very romantic, and very good-natured—"in my heart I trust the dear little boy was stolen, and not drowned."

CHAPTER III.

SOME four or five weeks after the events of our last chapter, Mr. Stonehenge was sitting writing in his private office, when his man-servant put his head into the room, saying—

"There is a man at the door, who wishes particularly to see you, sir."

"Then why not show him in, John?"

"Why, sir, he looks so remarkably shabby."

"That does not signify, John," returned the attorney. "You know I sometimes get queer customers."

"True, sir," replied John, with a smile, and in a few seconds he ushered in a tall man, who entered with an easy, unembarrassed air. John closed the door, and Mr. Stonehenge put down his pen and looked up in the face of his visitor. As he did so, he felt himself turn pale, and then red, while he leaned back in his chair with an exclamation of—

"God bless me! Mr. James Tregannon."

"Sir James Walpole Tregannon, I hope," very coolly returned the visitor, taking a chair and seating himself. "I am glad, Mr. Stonehenge, that you remember me."

"Perfectly," returned the attorney—"perfectly!" his mind impressed with a hundred visions of sudden greatness to be achieved through the instrumentality of his quondam client, whom our readers will at once recognise as the abductor of the unfortunate heir of Tregannon. In outward appearance he was by no means improved. The same tattered and miserable attire and rimless hat—his features even more cadaverous and worn. The only alteration was in his manner; he carried himself more erect, and his voice and action appeared almost insolent and audacious.

"Well, Mr. Stonehenge," began James Tregannon, after a short pause, "we meet again after a separation of nearly nine years. You see I am not improved in personal appearance," and he cast his battered hat from him with a gesture of contempt, adding, "I have suffered much, Mr. Stonehenge, from my uncle's unrelenting persecution of me. I wrote to him after that trial at Bodmin, stating that if he would give me six thousand pounds I would quit the country for ever. He took no notice of my letter; I wrote him a second, and gave way to the resentment I felt, and told him I would inherit Tregannon in spite of him. Well, for once fortune has stood my friend; I see by the papers that he poisoned himself, and that his son was drowned."

Mr. Stonehenge's eyes met those of the speaker with a strange, inquiring gaze; but James Tregannon bore the glance with a look of perfect self-possession.

"I see," said Mr. Stonehenge, after a moment's consideration, and in a very conciliating tone, "I see you have suffered much; but if this child should turn up——"

"Turn up!" interrupted James Tregannon; "oh! then you have not read this morning's paper?"

"Singular to say, I only read the leading article; but what paper do you refer to?"

"The *Falmouth Packet*," returned James Tregannon.

"I only saw the *Times*, and read the leading article on the state of France. What is the article you refer to?—has it reference to the unfortunate child of the deceased Baronet?"

"Precisely so; the body has been found."

Mr. Stonehenge turned very pale, and fidgeted on his chair.

"It seems," coolly continued James Tregannon, "that the boy must have fallen into the water, for the body was found in a hole some miles down the river, fast in a fishing weir, the face and body much mutilated by the action of the tide beating it against the rocks; but the garments were all recognised, and indeed the body also, the paper says, by the governess, and several domestics of my deceased uncle—and was buried with all due honour," he added, with a sneer; "so, my dear friend—for such I must always consider you, after the valuable service you rendered me some years ago—there will be no difficulty in

proving my rights, for, in the first place, the estate of Tregannon is strictly entailed, and even if the late Baronet left a will, it would not effect my rights to the title and property."

"Such is the fact," said the attorney; "but is there nothing—pardon me if I seem inquisitive—is there anything you yourself—"

"Stay," interrupted James Tregannon, "let us come to clear understanding. You, perhaps, saved my life; I feel therefore, under some obligation to you, and preferred coming to you to any other in your profession. Let us make it a matter of business at once. Now, I make you this offer—put me in full possession of my rights, and the day I am acknowledged Sir James Tregannon and possessor of the Tregannon estates, I will bind myself to pay you the sum of five thousand pounds, and constitute you my agent over the property. You may reside in the mansion, if you desire it; as I intend going abroad for some years."

"You have," eagerly replied Mr. Stonehenge, "made a handsome offer; now, to earn this sum and put you in possession, I must fully know how you are situated. I am aware that you have heavy debts; they can be settled. But there is something else, is there not?"

"Unquestionably there is," replied Mr. Tregannon, "some six months before I was arrested for those forgeries—you see, Mr. Stonehenge, I speak without reserve—I was intimately acquainted with a Mr. St. Leger, a young man of large property, who was about to visit the East—he was passionately fond of horses and horse-racing, and played high—he won some hundreds from me; however, to come to the point, I put his name to a cheque, and received two thousand five hundred pounds from his bankers, Messrs. B—— and D——, of London."

Mr. Stonehenge for a moment looked blank, but James Tregannon continued—

"I should have been prosecuted for this act, had I not been arrested for the other forgery, and before they could take steps to secure me, I got out of the way. Now, though this seems a bad business, to a clever man like you it will not be so."

"I do not know that," said Mr. Stonehenge, thoughtfully.

"But I will show you how you can easily get over it, previously to asserting my rights," said James Tregannon.

"Very good," said the attorney, "I am listening."

And thinking also, he might have said.

"Mr. St. Leger is a ruined man; he has dissipated a noble fortune, and is at this moment in a mean lodging in London, hiding from his creditors. Three thousand or five thousand pounds will settle that affair; you know how to go about it."

The attorney remained several moments buried in deep thought, and then, looking up more cheerfully, said, rubbing his hands—

"Yes, I think I can; I am intimately acquainted with the firm of B—— and D——. Is there anything else?"

James Tregannon hesitated — that hesitation led to ruinous consequences afterwards.

"No," said he, "there is nothing else that can affect my assuming my title and rights."

"Do you know what property goes to the late baronet's daughter?" questioned the attorney. "Miss Tregannon, who married Sir Charles Treacastle some three years ago, inherited her mother's property—the other two girls were provided for, I believe, in a clause in the late baronet's marriage settlement, when he married Miss Temple. He must have left some considerable property in money and otherwise," remarked Mr. Stonehenge, thoughtfully, "if there is no will, you will inherit this also."

"Well, the sooner you set about your inquiries, &c., the better for me and yourself."

"Certainly, I will lose no time," said Mr. Stonehenge. "To-morrow, at this hour, I will have a proper document drawn up for you to sign—business is business, you know, Mr. Tregannon."

"Undoubtedly," returned the future baronet; "but, in the meantime, I am reduced to great want, and my wife is ill. I am under an assumed name, and I want, as you may perceive, a better outfit. Let me have, therefore, a few pounds."

"Certainly," said the attorney; "indeed, I regret that you are placed in such a position; but, I think, for a week or so, you had better keep close."

Opening his desk, he took out three ten-pound notes, and handed them over to James Tregannon, who eagerly took them, saying, as he thrust them, crumpled, into the dilapidated breast-pocket of his coat—

“This will do—I will make myself more respectable in appearance before this time to-morrow.”

He rose as he spoke, and, in drawing his hand out of his pocket, he drew the lining with it—laughing, he was putting it back, not observing that in doing so, a crumpled paper fell from under the lining of the pocket. Though this escaped the eyes of James Tregannon, it did not the sharp, keen observation of the attorney, who said not a word, but rose up and accompanied his visitor to the door, without requiring the assistance of his man John.

As soon as the door closed upon Mr. James Tregannon, Mr. Stonehenge returned to his study, and, stooping down, picked up the crumpled piece of paper. If he knew how many anxious hours of torture and suspense—of fear and vexation the loss of that crumpled paper caused James Tregannon, he would have felt a kind of awe in lifting it from the floor, but Mr. Stonehenge had acted not merely from curiosity, but from a desire to gain, by any means, some insight into his old client's past life. He thought the paper might be a letter, might disclose some particulars that would perhaps be useful to him in his future proceedings; at all events, the lawyer was not scrupulous, we must confess.

Mr. Stonehenge therefore carelessly picked up the paper, and putting it on his desk, smoothed it out—it was written on both sides—he then cast his glance upon the four or five lines it contained. As he read, he felt himself grow faint, for he comprehended all—and sinking back into his chair, he looked like a man felled by some terrible blow; he remained thus for several minutes, gazing upon vacancy, although his mind was fully employed.

Suddenly he got up, locked the door, and taking the piece of paper that caused him so much emotion, he folded it carefully, enclosed it in a sheet of paper—lighting a taper, he sealed the packet, and wrote on the back—“Document received from James Walpole Tregannon, July the 3rd, 178—.” He then opened a small highly-finished iron casket, with a very peculiar lock—in this

casket he placed the packet, locked it, and putting the key into his pocket, sat down, and, for nearly an hour, remained buried in profound thought.

Starting up, with a heightened colour, he muttered, half aloud—

“No, I should be a fool to do so; I will not cast away fortune thus thrown into my very hands.”

And ringing his bell, desired John to go to the back office and summon Mr. Gilmour, his head clerk, to attend him.

We must now follow the footsteps of James Tregannon. When the door of the attorney's house closed upon him, he moved on a pace or two, and then paused, and, turning round, looked up at the windows; his eyes, as he did so, rested upon the face of a tall, handsome girl, standing at the open window, looking out upon the glorious bay; but, seeing the tall, shabbily-dressed individual looking up, she for an instant let her eyes rest upon his; having done so, she started back from the window, with a flush upon her cheek, she hardly knew why.

“Humph!” muttered James Tregannon, “a handsome girl—old Stonehenge's daughter, no doubt.”

He passed on, and descending a flight of steps, entered one of the most bustling streets of the town; going into a spirit store, he purchased a bottle of port wine and one of brandy. He next entered an apothecary's, and procured some ether and hartshorn, and some tonic mixture, and laden with these purchases, he proceeded into that quarter of the town mostly inhabited by the poor and needy. In truth, it was a dreary-looking locality. He passed on his way, and dirty and miserable in appearance were the habitations. At length he stopped before a mean-looking house, of two stories, a lodging-house, where poor wanderers and travellers were accommodated with a bed for two pence a-night, or a room for two shillings a-week. At the door of this house, with the fragment of a mop in her hand, a dirty cap, with a soiled piece of blue ribbon as an ornament on her head, stood a middle-aged woman; resting her mop on the ground, she eyed her lodger, and the bundles he carried under his arm, with a keen inquisitive look.

“Well, Smith, it's to be hoped you have gotten enough to pay for your week's lodging. Your wife's bad, I can tell

you; and I can't keep lodgings for trampers unless as how they pays for 'em—mine aint a tramper's inn."

"Curse you and your filthy house," fiercely interrupted James Tregannon, at the same time tossing a five-shilling piece at the woman's feet; and pushing her aside, went into the house, mounted a most crazy flight of stairs, and entered a miserably-furnished room. A low bed, with patched and soiled quilt, a deal table, two ricketty chairs, and a triangular piece of looking-glass stuck against the bare wall, constituted the furniture of this apartment, and on that wretched bed lay the wife of James Walpole Tregannon, the man who, in a few short weeks, was to possess a title and fourteen thousand a-year.

We said, on the bed lay his wretched wife, she was dying—dying fast, from vice, from misery, from drink—she was fearfully emaciated—the eyes sunk—the forehead damp with perspiration, and the thin colourless lips drawn tight across teeth that once were unrivalled for beauty. The glassy eyes turned upon her husband as he entered, and his were bent upon hers; he gave a slight start, for at a glance he saw that the fell destroyer—Death, was there. Did that man of crime, that man of an iron heart, feel no pang as he looked into that once fair face, then so ghastly and so wan? Did no remorse strike his soul, no thought of the future appal his mind, and make him tremble for the hour when he should feel the destroyer's hand pressed upon himself? Outwardly, he showed no symptoms, but the heart is not so easily read as the features. He approached the bed, saying:—

"Well, Jane, I have good news for you, and bring you something to cheer your heart; I shall soon get you well now."

And he commenced drawing the cork from the port wine bottle.

"James," murmured the unfortunate woman, in a low, mournful voice, "James, I am dying! Oh, my God! bring me a clergyman."

"Tut, nonsense," sharply returned James Tregannon, "you are weak from want of good food; take this cup of wine, it will revive you and give you spirits."

The miserable woman eagerly held out her emaciated hand, and though, as she carried the cup to her lips, it shook fearfully, she drank it down; it seemed instantly to

revive her, for she tried to raise herself a little, and a faint flush came into her pale cheek.

"Ah, did I not tell you so, my poor girl; so you are better now—another cup will enable you to sit up."

And he held a full one to her.

"Yes, it warms me," she murmured, "and yet my breath—"

She drank the second cup and then fell back. The words, "my God," were murmured. She raised her hand wildly, and then, with a short struggle, breathed her last sigh—she was dead!

James Tregannon, this time, did shudder, as, in a loud voice, he called upon the woman of the house.

The woman came coolly and unconcernedly into the chamber of death, and as she cast her eyes upon the bed, said—

"Ah! you let her take too much at a time, not indeed that she could have lived beyond a few hours."

James Tregannon, this man of crime and infamy, stood, for a moment, as if some portion of feeling still remained in his obdurate heart. His eyes were fixed upon the face of her, who, whatever had been her vices and crimes, had clung to him through years of degradation and misery. Memory, for a moment, was busy in the brain of the wretched husband, and visions of the past recalled the face, at that moment so ghastly and terrible to look upon, once fair and beautiful; but, alas! it was beauty only of face and form, for the heart, from very early youth, was corrupt to the very core. Latterly, he had become rough, and, at times, almost brutal in his conduct towards her, which caused her to try and bury her recollections of the past in drink, and to this besetting sin she gave way, till it killed her.

Poverty, abject poverty, is a hard taskmaster. The good and pious bear it with resignation, and die, looking further than the grave for their reward. The vicious and depraved are driven by it into greater crime, and too often die, cursing only their ill-fortune, and with no thought of the future.

"Well, Smith," said the woman of the house, looking as unconcernedly upon the corpse as upon a dead kitten. "have you money enough to bury her?—if not, you must apply —"

"Silence, woman!" savagely interrupted James Tregannon, rousing from his reverie.

Putting his hand into his pocket, he took out five guineas and threw them on the table. The woman's eyes glistened as they became fixed upon the gold, which had for her the power of the rattlesnake—it fascinated her.

"There, woman, is money; order what is necessary, and let her be buried in the church of this parish. If you want more money you shall have it—let all be decently done."

The woman looked at him with astonishment depicted in her countenance.

"You may depend, Mr. Smith, she shall be decently laid out, and I'll go instantly for Mrs. Jones."

"Do so," impatiently interrupted James Tregannon, and taking up his hat, he walked out.

"I think as how he's been a gentleman once, and p'raps he's got some of his money again," said the woman; "well, I'll go and fetch my crony, and we'll have a drop of this wine anyhow."

Filling herself out a cup-full, she looked round the room, and then at the corpse.

"Ah!" she muttered, "it's good wine, but she was too far gone."

James Tregannon did not return till dusk, and then the woman of the house looked at him with considerable surprise and no little increased respect; for he was now attired in an entire suit of mourning, a new hat, &c., and whether it was the dress or a change of manner that made so vast a difference, but both herself and Mrs. Jones (they both smelt strongly of brandy) appeared confounded, dropping curtsy after curtsy as he entered the house—but not the chamber of the dead. He paused at the foot of the stairs, and to the infinite amazement of the two women, gave his landlady five guineas more, saying—

"I shall return to-morrow. Let everything be ready by the day after;" and without another word, he left the house.

CHAPTER V.

WE commenced our tale in the county of Cornwall—we begin this chapter in the county of Dorset, in the latter

part of a very cold October, some four years, or rather more, from the time that our story opened. Six or seven miles from Axminster, and four or five from the romantically situated, but then insignificant village of Charmouth, is an extensive—at least it was in 178—,—tract of uncultivated land—in fact, a common or moor, without a single habitation on it. On the north it was bounded by some well-cultivated land; on the south by the high and picturesque hills above Charmouth. It was about three o'clock in the afternoon, and a cold cutting east wind swept across the moor, on which nothing grew, if we except patches of parched grass, some tall ferns, and low furze bushes.

There were two deep hollows or dells, some distance one from the other, that stretched across the moor in a zigzag direction; down in these dells the grass was of a fresher colour, and a few wild flowers and wild strawberries in the season flourished under shelter from the cold winds.

At the bottom of one of these dells, was a low tent, or rather a large old sail spread over some hoops, and pegged to the ground; a very sombre-looking donkey was standing near this tent; his long ears bent back and his head drooping; he looked as if he were sleeping or buried in profound thought, from which he suddenly roused himself, from some unknown cause, and pricking up his ears all at once, broke out into one of those terrible prolonged brayings, so utterly at variance with the harmony of sound, that it brought its owner out from beneath the tent, with a stout stick in his hand, with which he commenced belabouring the unfortunate musician with might and main; thereby proving whatever his profession might be, that he was not an admirer of unearthly sounds. Neither liking the blows or the curses he received, this most useful, but in general most ill-used animal, got out of the way as fast as he could. The man then climbed to the summit of the dell, and cast a glance across the moor towards Charmouth.

The person who had thus rudely evinced his dislike to discordant sounds, was a tall powerful man, of some three or four and thirty years, his face, at least, all you could see of it, for though the rage for beards did not then exist as at present, was nearly hidden in a mass of black whiskers and beard; the rest of his features were concealed by a thick

coat of either soot or some other equally efficacious substance for darkening the complexion. His features were well-formed, though what with the beard and the soot, and the bushy eyebrows, he had a most savage appearance. He was evidently a travelling tinker, wore a greasy leather apron, an equally unsightly cap, and thick leather gaiters. Putting his hands before his eyes, he looked across the moor.

"Ha!" he muttered, "the imp! he's coming at last. I'll teach him to be nimble, before I've done with him. Confound him, I have had a lot of trouble and risk with him, and no pay as yet; but I will not stand this much longer, for I must get out of this country."

As he muttered these words, a young boy about seven years old was seen running across the common towards him with something under his arm. The boy was miserably clad, and miserably thin, and yet it was impossible, notwithstanding his bare feet, tattered garments, and sooty coloured skin, not to be struck with his little figure, the singular beauty of his features, and the glossy dark brown curls, that clustered round his head and down on his shoulders, for covering on the head he had none. The poor boy had a large bottle under one arm and a brown paper parcel under the other. He looked up as he approached the man with his large bright hazel eyes. He could see by the dark scowl on his face that a storm was brewing, in fact, ready to burst upon his head, yet he came up close to him without a show of fear, and handed the bottle and the parcel.

"You cursed lazy young hound, three hours going scarcely nine miles," fiercely exclaimed the tall ruffian. "Take that, and let it teach you to stir your stumps another time."

And with the back of his hand the brute struck the child a blow across the face, that tumbled him over on the ground and caused the blood to flow in a torrent from his nostrils. The child rose up without a cry or a tear, though he staggered from weakness. The man's countenance underwent a strange change; he looked at the child, and muttered:

"What a cursed brute I'm growing."

And taking a piece of coarse bread from his pocket, gave it to the silent sufferer, who was wiping the blood and soot

from his face, thereby leaving his soft complexion to be seen in contrast with the rest of his soiled skin.

“Did you see Bill?” demanded the man.

“Yes,” returned the boy. “He is coming across the moor.”

“Well, go look after the donkey, and don’t come back till sunset.”

So saying the man descended into the hollow and dived beneath the tent.

The child stood for a moment, with the coarse lump of bread in his hand. He had not eaten anything that day. The tears came into his eyes as he gazed wistfully across the common; the cutting wind piercing through his thin and miserable garments. Young as he was, misery and ill-treatment had acted upon him like years,—the child thought and reflected like a boy of ten or twelve years old.

“I will run away,” he murmured. “I heard them say I am not their child. I never thought I was. I must have dreamed that I once was in a fine house, for I see it always when I shut my eyes, and had a papa—or I dreamed that too.”

As he spoke, he saw the form of a man coming across the moor. “That is that brute Bill,” he muttered with a sigh, and then plunged into the hollow, and hiding himself behind a furze, he watched the man, Bill, a tinker also in appearance, as he entered beneath the awning, and then creeping cautiously and noiselessly forward, he got quite close to the back of the tent, and putting his ear to a split in the canvass, listened eagerly for nearly a quarter-of-an-hour; he then crawled as cautiously away, till he had placed some furze bushes between him and the tent. Getting upon his legs, he climbed up the bank, ran swiftly across the moor till he reached the other dell; into this he plunged.

It was now nearly three o’clock. Along this winding hollow the child continued to run for more than a mile and a half, till he reached a cross road. There were still three miles of common, or rather hollow patches of ground; some signs of cultivation, however, and a few scattered farm houses, and several flocks of sheep feeding on the short but sweet pasturage. The boy looked about him, and saw a shepherd, and a curly hairy-looking dog without a tail sitting on the side of a bank near him, eating a huge

slice of cheese and bread, and the dog eyeing him with considerable anxiety. The boy walked up to the shepherd, notwithstanding that the dog without the tail made a rush at him—but the child stood his ground, and the shepherd called back his dog.

"Please, sir," said the boy, "how many miles be it to Bridport?"

"Well, my little lad, it be nigh seven; be ye going there?"

"Yes, sir, I be; and does yon cross road lead into the great road, the one where the coaches do go to Lyme on?"

"That be the very road, lad; but, stay a bit, and take a piece of this cheese. It will do you good, my lad."

And so saying, the man, good naturedly, cut off a huge slice of bread and cheese, which he handed to the boy, who, with tears in his eyes, thanking the shepherd from his little heart, pursued his way along the cross road, till a fine clear spring of water running into a pool attracted his attention. Here he sat down, ate his bread and cheese, and, after drinking of the clear, pure water, proceeded to wash and cleanse his face, neck, and hands, a proceeding he dared not venture upon when with the tinker and his wife, under the fear of a terrible beating.

Without soap, it was not very easy to get off the thick coat of soot and stain rubbed on his face and neck, but he marvellously improved the appearance of his features.

By this time the sun was setting, but from where he stood, he could plainly perceive, in the vale below, the town of Bridport, with the river Brit running through the vale, and by the town, and rising up against the darkening sky, the square tower of St. Mary's. Before him, also, was the turnpike road from Bridport to Lyme Regis and Axminster.

Looking about him, in search of a sheltered place, from which he could clearly observe everything that passed, he saw a low broken wall, with a thick covering of ivy, and through the broken gaps he could watch the road. Having ensconced himself to his liking he lay down, and, with patient perseverance, kept watching everything that passed on the road. A few labourers, several carts, a waggon or so passed, before it became dark; these did not attract the boy's attention. Presently the stars shone out clear and

bright, and the cold increased, still the young child watched; anon the tramp of horses and the roll of wheels reached his ear, coming up the steep hill from the town, and then the lamps of a stage coach caught his attention, and the heavy six-inside stage-coach from Dorchester, through Lyme Regis to Axminster, came slowly along, the horses encircled in a mist, from their own backs, and the stout coachman encouraging them with whip and voice. The top of the hill gained, the coachman coaxed his steeds into a trot, and they vanished from the sight of the lonely child.

Gentle reader, we must, for a few pages, leave the poor boy to his solitary watch, and follow the Dorchester stage in its journey to Lyme Regis.

Inside were stowed—we say stowed—because, in sooth, the interior of the old coach, notwithstanding its ponderosity, was little calculated to hold the six individuals it held that night. With their backs to the horses, occupying the corners, were two worthy and remarkably stout spinsters, on the wrong side of forty, both respectable lodging-house-keepers at Lyme Regis. In fact, the seat was well filled by them alone, but, unfortunately, just as the coach was starting from Bridport, the wife of the principal butcher at Axminster became a candidate for the sixth seat, which was between the two spinsters.

Fortunately the horses had their backs to this new passenger, or they must have felt horrified, for good Mrs. Jos Burfat was the stoutest woman in Dorsetshire, and that's saying much; she acknowledged to eighteen stone, and the said jolly lady, with a basket and a bundle, which she would, on no account, let out of her hands, forced her way in at the door, with the aid of the stout coachman, who put his back against hers to assist her ascent, and forthwith dropped her between the two unfortunate spinsters; whether she reached the seat, or supported herself on the hips of the two corners, we know not, but a deep groan issued from their lips, as Mrs. Jos Burfat, who seemed quite comfortable, said, in a bland, oily tone of voice—

“I hope I doesn't *hincommode* you, ma'am; we shall all get quite comfortable, after we gets a shake or two.”

The two spinsters could only sigh, and off started the coach. On the opposite seat sat three gentlemen, so we must, at all events, call them. In the right hand corner

was a Mr. Parks, a lawyer of considerable practice and experience, residing in a handsome villa, within a couple of miles of Lyme. He had come down from London to Bridport, by mail, but having some business there, that occupied him an hour or so, he lost the mail, and being anxious to get home that night, took a place in the "Heavy Axminster." Next Mr. Parks sat a young gentleman, elaborately dressed, in the height of the fashion, with a profusion of jewellery on his hands and person, who talked a great deal after the coach started, about London, the theatres, balls, operas, &c. Stating that, tired of dissipation, he had made up his mind to lead a rural sea-side kind of life, and was going to Lyme, and thence to Charmouth; the latter place, he understood, was remarkably salubrious, retired, and picturesque. All this conversation was addressed to every body inside the coach, and replied to by none; next this young gentleman was a tall man, entirely enveloped in an immense military mantle—the collar buttoned close round his face, leaving only the eyes visible; and as the night set in, on quitting the "Bell" yard at Bridport, the said eyes also became invisible, whilst not a word proceeded from this passenger's lips.

The young gentleman with the jewellery finding he had all the conversation to himself, became silent. The three females were silent also, from various causes. Mrs. Jos Burfat was calculating the gross profits arising from a speculation she had made that day. The two spinsters were calculating, between the intervals of suffocation they endured from Mrs. Jos, whether it would not be possible to induce the young gentleman opposite to try the sea breeze of Lyme, instead of Charmouth—this latter place was not, at that time, a rival "watering place."

Fortunately for the spinsters, the distance from Bridport to Lyme Regis was only ten miles or so, which distance the "Heavy Axminster" could comfortably perform in three hours, or thereabouts. But just as the coach reached the bottom of a hill, and was ascending another, it suddenly began to stop, and several loud voices were audible, and some deep curses and imprecations hurled at the coachman. One loud, clear voice was distinctly heard, saying—

"Pull up, or by —— I'll blow your brains out."

"Oh, Lord, a' mercy upon us!" screamed the two spinsters. "Robbers! We shall be robbed and murdered!"

"Mercy on me!" exclaimed Mrs. Jos Burfat, "I'm a ruined woman."

At the word "robbers," the tall silent gentleman, in the corner, sat bolt upright, and all inside could hear the click of a pistol lock, as he pulled one out from beneath his mantle.

Mr. Parks very quietly put his hand into his pocket, perfectly resigned to give up its contents, which probably only amounted to a few pounds. During these proceedings, which occupied but a few seconds, the coach came to a full stop, the door was rudely pulled open, and a tall, strong man, with the coach lamp in his hand, his face covered with black crape, and his person by a long carter's frock, appeared at the door; behind him were three others, similarly disguised, and each held a horse pistol in their hands.

The gentleman in the mantle drew back the pistol, when he saw the odds he had to contend with, but the women screamed murder and all sorts of things.

"Silence, you bedlamites, with your yells," said the highwayman, "make no words, but hand over your purses and rings, and no harm will come to you."

As he spoke the man put a foot upon the step and held up the open lamp, the light, as he did so, flashing on the features of the stranger in the mantle, whose collar had fallen back.

"Ha, by —— is it you?" exclaimed the robber, in a tone of intense surprise; "come, jump out, I must speak with you. Here, Jem, levy contributions, and see you turn their pockets inside out. No skulking or hiding your purses, or it will be worse for you all."

The man in the mantle appeared electrified, but he jumped out at once; as he did so, Mr. Parks, with all the lawyer's sagacity, having heard the words, cast a keen glance at his face and figure by the light of the coach-lamp. Another of the highwaymen entered the coach, and with a coarse, brutal oath, told the inmates to be quick, or he'd search them in a way they would not like. Mr. Parks delivered his purse and watch. The young Londoner whispered something in the robber's ear, who burst into a loud laugh, saying, with a hideous oath—

"No go, young man. Don't acknowledge the fraternity; so hand out and off with those pretty sparklers, if they are not shams."

"Curse you!" muttered the young man, "hold your tongue—take what I have, and the devil do you good with it."

"Ha, ha, ha," laughed the robber, pocketing the contribution, and turning to Mrs. Jos. "Now, Mrs. Tallow."

"Lord, 'a mercy, sir. You would not, sure?"

"Come, no jaw, missus. You're fat enough to melt anyhow. What's in your basket?"

While the highwayman plundered the inside and outside passengers, the stranger in the mantle, after jumping out of the coach, stepped aside with the tall robber who had first appeared at the coach door.

"How is this?" said the highwayman to the stranger, "that I find you here? Why am I treated with such neglect? You seem to forget our contract, and the peril you incur by treating my repeated——"

"Nonsense!" interrupted the stranger; "this is idle talk. My situation is worse than yours. After your exclamation I cannot go back into the coach, nor proceed to Lyme. There is a lawyer named Parks inside, so let the stage proceed. I have no luggage, and I will walk on to Charmouth with you, and a few words will convince you you wrong me; besides, you must have been mad to have engaged in this highway robbery."

"Tut," replied the robber, "a man must live; but stay where you are, I will be back in a minute. I cannot give you more than half-an-hour, for I have a better job on hands than this. I wished those rascals not to meddle with the stage; but the devil himself could not manage these fellows at times."

So saying, the robber joined his comrades, and in less than five minutes the old stage was rumbling away as fast as the astounded driver could urge the horses; and, like magic, the robbers themselves disappeared, leaving the stranger and the principal highwayman together.

We return to the little boy we left watching behind the wall upon the summit of the hill above Bridport.

About an hour after the passing of the heavy Axminster stage, the little fellow again perceiving two brilliant

lights coming up the hill, jumped up and ran out upon the road. Presently the two lights came close to him; they were the lamps of a handsome gig, in which sat a gentleman buttoned up in a great coat, and by his side a groom in livery. The horse was a splendid, high-spirited animal, and seeing the boy in the middle of the road before his master did, he snorted and stood stock still.

"Hallo! what's the matter, Bess, what's the matter?" said a fine mellow voice from the gig; "what do you see, old girl?"

Just then, as the groom was getting down, the child came to the side of the gig, with the light of the lamp playing full upon his interesting, handsome face.

"Please, sir," said the child, in his sweet-toned voice, "will you stop?"

The gentleman checked the horse, who was again going on, and, looking with extreme surprise down into the boy's face, said—

"Well, my poor little fellow, what is the matter? how comes it you are out at this hour, and so cold a night? William," he added, turning to his groom, "give the child, God help it, a shilling, I cannot get my hand in my pocket."

"Oh, sir," said the child, "I don't want to beg—is your name Mr. Bond, please, sir?"

"By Jove, it is, my little fellow," returned Mr. Bond, surprised; "what then?"

"Please sir, don't go home through 'Grange Hollow;' there be seven men, with their faces blackened, awaiting there to rob you, and kill your horse."

"Hallo, the devil they will—by Jove, that's serious. Help the little fellow up here, William. What a handsome child it is. I must hear more of this. Are you alone, child?" said Mr. Bond.

"Yes, sir, I be quite alone—neither father nor mother."

"Lord, sir," said the groom, as he lifted the boy up, "I wanted your worship to bring fire-arms; they do say there are a lot of bad ones hiding about Charmouth cliffs. We shall be shot down like ducks."

"Faith, I hope not, William," said Mr. Bond, with a laugh; "I have nothing of the duck in my nature, being neither feathered nor web-footed, and no more idea of swimming than a stone. Now, my poor little fellow," continued

Mr. Bond, in a very kind tone, and taking the child's cold hand in his, after handing the reins to the groom, "tell me who you are, and all about these rascals with the black faces. Now, do not be frightened—we are good six miles and more from Grange Hollow."

"I'm not frightened, sir," said the child; "I be not afraid of anything."

"By Jove, a fine little fellow, William," said Mr. Bond, putting the skirts of his great coat round the child. "Now tell me all you know."

The boy, in his own way, told his little story: he said he was cruelly treated by a tinker, known by the name of Black George—that there was a gang of them in different places about the country; and that that morning he had listened at Black George's tent, and heard him and a tinker, called Larking Bill, settling how they would stop and rob a Mr. Bond, by shooting his horse; that they had a spy on Mr. Bond's movements, and knew he was to leave Bridport at nine o'clock at night, and that he had a very large sum of money with him; they were seven in number, and they were to blacken their faces, and wear long carters' frocks; and he overheard the tinker "George" say to his wife, that he was to have a great sum of money for taking him (the child) out of the country.

This narrative was only got out of the little fellow by repeated questioning by Mr. Bond, who became greatly interested. It was difficult also to comprehend the child—for notwithstanding he was full seven years old, he seemed much at a loss for words to express his meaning.

"Had we not better return to Bridport for the night, sir?" said the groom.

"You are easily frightened, William," said Mr. Bond; "I shall have your mistress in a fever by such a proceeding. These rascals have been skulking about this part of the country for some time, and escaping detection by passing themselves off as gipsy tinkers; but I'll ferret them out to-morrow; I will take care of this little fellow; he shall not go back to those rascals again; he has been stolen, no doubt, from some respectable persons, for there never was so handsome and fair a face belonging to the gipsy tinkers' brats."

He could hear the poor boy sob, as he kissed his

Patting him on the head, he made him lie down on the rug, and the groom covered him over with the horse-cloth.

"What's your name, little fellow?"

"Harry, sir," said the boy, as he laid down.

"Ha! by Jupiter, my own name. There's a cross road within a mile or two of this," said Mr. Bond, "it's a rough one, to be sure, but it will take us below the village of Charmouth, across the ford, and thus we can reach home without going near Grange Hollow—it's four miles round, to be sure, but I would not for fifty have Bess shot at."

"If you reach Charmouth in time, sir," said the groom, "you could send out some constables, and block up both ends of Grange Hollow, and catch the highwaymen."

"The first shot," said Mr. Bond, "would send the Charmouth constables running like a pack of beagles. I remember too well the way they left me when hunting up the gang of smugglers from the cliffs."

So saying, Mr. Bond drove on, while the child, tired and worn out, fell asleep at his feet.

They soon reached the cross road, down which Mr. Bond turned his horse. It was in truth a very indifferent one, like all the Dorsetshire cross roads, extremely narrow, with high hedges and deep ruts, enough to break the springs of any vehicle. Nevertheless Mr. Bond surmounted all the difficulties of the way, and crossing the ford of the Char, he continued his route up another road, till he finally got out on the main road, within a mile or two of his own mansion, which was beautifully situated on a gently rising ground half-a-mile from the sea, and within a mile or so of the town of Lyme Regis.

The gig, at length, drew up before a very handsome lodge-gate, with a remarkably pretty Swiss Cottage hid in a cluster of evergreens near it. A woman of some five or six-and-thirty years of age, neat and highly respectable in her person and attire, came out to open the gate.

"Well, Mrs. Horn, here we are, safe and sound, a couple of hours behind time."

"Bless me, sir!" exclaimed the gate-keeper's wife. "Bless me, what rain and roads you must have had!" eyeing the mud-covered wheels with great surprise; "we've not had a drop of rain here."

"By Jove, nor we either, Mrs. Horn. Now come round

to this side with your light, for my lamp is out; I have got something here under the rug I want you to take charge of for the night. Now, William, lift him out; poor little thing, he is fast asleep."

Mrs. Horn looked the picture of astonishment when she beheld the form of the miserably clothed child, who looked up as the groom lifted him out of the gig; but Mrs. Horn's light falling on the sweet expressive countenance, she exclaimed—

"Law, sir, what a nice pretty child!—how thin it is!"

"Ah, we'll soon fatten him, Mrs. Horn. Now, my poor child, go with this kind, good woman; she will give you some supper and a good bed, and to-morrow I will have you up to the house."

The tears flowed from the boy's eyes at the words of kindness addressed to him, and kissing his benefactor's hand repeatedly, he followed Mrs. Horn into the cottage.

"Dress him in your son William's garments, Mrs. Horn," said Mr. Bond, as he was driving off, "they are much of the same age, though this little fellow is tall and thin."

Mr. Horn, the husband and the gate-keeper, was also Mr. Bond's game-keeper; he was then walking the preserves. Mr. Bond drove on up a long serpentine avenue, bordered on one side by tall trees and evergreens, with the bright calm sea lying before them, just then becoming visible from the light of the moon at that moment rising from its ocean bed, and shortly after drew up before the front of a very extensive and handsome modern mansion.

CHAPTER V

HENRY EDGAR BOND, Esq., the gentleman who so benevolently took charge of the boy, as related in our last chapter, was of a very old aristocratic Dorsetshire family. Early in life this gentleman, whose property and influence were considerable in his native county, married the only daughter of Sir Henry Claude Tregannon, father to the late baronet, whose untimely and terrible death we have recorded. Thus, through a singular combination of circumstances, under the directing hand of Providence, the

lost child and heir of the unfortunate Baronet was actually taken under the protection, and even the roof, of his aunt's husband; for, no doubt, our readers have surmised, that the poor boy so cruelly treated, and so miserably clad and fed, was no other than the lost heir of Tregannon.

Though a most amiable and lovely girl, Mrs. Bond, before her marriage, was never a favourite with her eccentric and strange brother. Nevertheless she was fondly attached to him, pitying his nervous temperament, and his bodily infirmities; but from the day of her marriage with Mr. Bond, all intercourse had ceased between them.

Mr. Bond first met Miss Tregannon in Devonshire, where she was passing the Christmas. At that time he was a very handsome high-spirited young man, and was shooting in the season, at a friend's house near where Miss Tregannon was staying; they met frequently, and as young people will do, fell in love with each other. Mr. Bond, whose station in society was unquestionable, and whose fortune rendered him a most desirable match, considered that he had nothing to do, but, as a matter of courtesy, ask the lady's hand of her brother, she being of age, and quite independent.

To his extreme surprise, Sir Henry Tregannon declined giving his consent, saying—

“All the Dorsetshire gentlemen spend their fortunes on dogs and horses.”

Mr. Bond was too good-tempered to be vexed, and too much in love to trouble himself much about the Baronet's conduct, especially as the lady only required him to make a formal proposal for her hand to her brother as the head of the family, but was quite determined, as she knew her heart was well disposed of, to follow its dictates, whether her brother gave his consent or not. They were, therefore, married, and Mr. Bond returned to his beautiful seat of Grange House, Dorsetshire, with his lovely and accomplished bride.

Sir Henry never spoke to, or returned even an answer to any of his sister's letters after that event.

The young couple lived most happily—the only drawback they experienced to their felicity was that they had no children, and they both loved children in their hearts. At the time Mr. Bond so strangely and providentially

stumbled on little Harry, they had both passed the period of youth, and abandoned all hope of any offspring. This was the more tantalizing, as, in default of male heir, his estates would go to his only male relative, a man of a most revengeful disposition, a cousin, unmarried, and a miser. Mr. Bond had it in his power, however, to will a considerable property to whom he pleased; for he did not at any time spend much more than the half of his income, which exceeded five thousand pounds a year. At the period of young Harry's introduction to Grange House, Mr. Bond was in his forty-fourth year, his lady three years younger. He was still a handsome man, above the middle height, strongly built—with fair hair, blue eyes, and fine ruddy complexion; and so temperate were his habits, and robust his constitution, that he did not look more than six-and-thirty.

No sorrow had ever troubled his life—therefore no wrinkle furrowed his brow, or tinged his hair with grey. He was a magistrate, kind and benevolent to the poor, and a most indulgent landlord. Upon poachers, being a thorough sportsman, he was, perhaps, rather severe. He kept the best pack of hounds within thirty miles, and rode the best hunters; as he advanced in life he rode thirteen stone, and yet there was scarcely a fence in the country would stop him. He was also fond of the sea—kept a remarkably fast yacht, of some fifty odd tons, in the harbour of Lyme Regis, and was considered by the club to be a first rate yachtsman, and not a bad sailor. He kept a good deal of company; never drank to excess—rose early, and lived well. To add to his other qualifications, he was a steady staunch, Church-of-England supporter, and had a great aversion to dissenters of all kinds and denominations. He was often earnestly entreated, by his numerous friends and others, to stand for the Borough of Bridport, but he had not the slightest ambition, and declined putting himself out of the way to oblige a party, though in all other matters he was a most generous friend and patron.

Before daylight next morning—for Mr. Bond was a most zealous and active magistrate—he despatched a party of resolute constables to scour the country in search of the gang of highwaymen, disguised as gipsy tinkers.

Conversing over his last night's adventure whilst at breakfast, Mrs. Bond became anxious to see the little boy. Their *tête-à-tête* was interrupted by a constable galloping up the avenue to the front door, requesting to see Mr. Bond.

"Shew him into my study, James," said the magistrate to his servant.

"There's been pretty work, your worship!" said the constable to Mr. Bond, on entering the study; "the rascals have had the *hardacity* to attack the Axminster stage last night, your honour."

"Oh! the deuce they have," said Mr. Bond.

"Yes, your honour; and, by gosh, they stripped the six inside passengers of every copper they had. Your honour's friend, lawyer Parks, was inside, and lost his purse and watch, and worthy Mrs. Burfat, of Axminster, was robbed of forty-four pounds odd shillings. The men had their faces blackened, and wore smock-frocks."

"By Jove, this is serious. Did you pick up any suspicious characters this morning, Mr. Jones?"

"Yes, your worship, we secured three travelling tinkers, encamped near 'Grange Hollow,' and two others near Charmouth; but, do you know, they only laughed at us for taking them for highwaymen."

"What have you done with them, Jones? Found anything on them suspicious?"

"Two-pence three farthings on one, your worship, and about three shillings on another, but nothing else. We have lodged them in our lock-up, waiting your presence and Mr. Parks's, and a young gentleman who came in the Axminster stage—but we can't find this one nowhere, though we searched all the inns and lodging-houses in Lyme. Mr. Parks says as how he was a suspicious character."

"Well, Jones, go back, and tell Mr. Parks I will be in Lyme in half an hour."

Ten minutes afterwards Mr. Bond was galloping down the avenue. On reaching the head inn, fresh intelligence had arrived. A Mr. Stephens, coming home in his gig from Bridport, in passing through Grange Hollow, had his horse shot, and himself robbed; and he said that one of the men swore a fierce oath, saying, 'By ———, this is not Bond, after all.'

"Well, by Jove!" muttered Mr. Bond; "I owe, if not my life, eight hundred pounds to the little fellow's information."

Mrs. Bond being extremely anxious to see the young child, both from the account her husband had given her of his interesting and handsome countenance, and also feeling under an obligation to the little fellow for the service he had rendered, sent her favourite personal attendant, Hannah, to the Lodge to bring him up to the house. Mrs. Horn, the gamekeeper's good-natured wife, had taken considerable pains with the child, not only from her own naturally good disposition, but from the account William the groom gave her the following morning of the child's conduct the preceding night, saving them from being robbed, and his master's favourite horse from being shot. The first process was to subject her charge to a most vigorous scrubbing. The beauty and fairness of his skin surprised her, and so great was the change that she scarcely recognised him. William, who came down to the Lodge early, was in raptures with the boy, vowed his master would make a gentleman of him, and that he would teach him to cross a ditch or a fence with the best man in the county.

The child said, with a smile, he could get over any fence or ditch.

"Ah!" said the groom, "no doubt. The rascals that stole you made you go through fences to steal fowls." He shook his fist, and in a paroxysm of valour clenched his hand, wishing he had a grip of two or three of them.

The boy was finished being dressed in a suit of the gamekeeper's son's garments, for which act of generosity on the part of Mrs. Horn her son roared loudly and kicked vigorously, shaking his little fist furiously at Harry for thus figuring in his Sunday suit. For this expression of his indignation he received a smart box on the ear, which rather increased the roaring, but stopped the kicking. In the midst of this scene in walked Mrs. Bond's maid, Hannah. This young woman—and a very good-looking young woman she was—about eighteen years of age—was perhaps the only person in Mrs. Bond's service who would look upon the child, if brought into the mansion to live, with a certain sort of dislike. This did not proceed from ill-nature or a bad disposition—for, in truth,

Hannah was in general a very good-tempered and well-disposed person.

She was a great favourite with her mistress, who received her into her service at the age of fourteen.

Mrs. Bond differed from many married ladies not blessed with children. She kept neither a pet spaniel, pug, or poodle, but she dearly loved children.

When Hannah, therefore, beheld the strikingly beautiful boy, thus strangely to be introduced into the family, her heart fluttered with a feeling something akin to aversion—for it told her that that lovely child, with its magnificent eyes and soft pensive look, his beautiful white broad forehead, with the rich cluster of curls, of a dark auburn, encircling it, would become a prodigious favourite—in fact, completely put her into the background, or to be only a second favourite and perhaps be appointed to attend on the little stranger. There was nothing very contrary to human nature in the little feeling of envy that, for a moment, took possession of Hannah's heart.

"Well, Miss Hannah," said Mrs. Horn, with really a feeling of pride at her own handy work, "what do you think of this dear little fellow? isn't he a real beauty? I'm very sure he's some gentleman's child, stolen away by those shocking vagrants, the gipsy tinkers."

"Law," said Hannah, "I don't see why poor people should not have as handsome children as rich—or why their skins should not be as white. He's a very well-looking boy, no doubt; so is your John, Mrs. Horn."

"I'm much obliged to you, Miss Hannah, for thinking so," said the gamekeeper's wife; "but, indeed, this is a mighty pretty child; and when he gets a little flesh, you won't know him."

"Well, people will take fancies, Mrs. Horn," said the lady's maid; "and I dare say my mistress will make a page of this little fellow—he will do very well for that station in two or three years. It's very strange!" she continued, looking at the child, whose soft, winning eyes were fixed upon hers with so much sweetness and good nature, that they quite softened Hannah's heart.

"What's strange, Miss Hannah?" asked William, the groom, taking the boy by the hand to lead him up to the house.

"Why," resumed the girl, "the more I look at him, I fancy I have seen some one very like him about the eyes. What does he say his name is, Mrs. Horn?"

"Harry, he calls himself," she replied.

"By gummers, Miss Hannah," said the groom, "talking of who he's like. He has the same eyes and nose—I' blessed if he hasn't—as our missus."

"Well, there's no use one staying here guessing who he's like," said the maid. "I will take him up at once. My good lady is anxious to see him; so come along with me, Harry."

The boy gave his hand readily to the girl, but first threw his arms round Mrs. Horn's neck, and kissed her most affectionately.

"He is a dear little fellow, be he who he may," said good Mrs. Horn, kissing him, and telling him to come and see her every day, and play with her little John.

Taking him by the hand, Hannah led the boy up the serpentine avenue to the mansion. There was a resemblance in some respects in the lawn, the lofty trees, and the shrubbery of evergreens on the side of Grange House to that of Tregannon. To be sure, instead of the lawn being bounded by the narrow waters of the Fal, the wide open expanse of sea lay stretched out in glorious beauty before Grange House.

As the boy walked up the avenue, he looked often about him, with a strange, pensive, inquiring look; gradually the tears came into his eyes, as if some chord in his young memory was suddenly struck.

Hannah looked into the child's face, and seeing the tears streaming down his cheeks, said, in a tone of surprise:

"What on earth are you crying for, little boy?"

"Don't know, ma'am," said the child—

He tried to say something more as if to embody, perhaps, the flash of memory like a meteor dashing through his little brain, but he wanted words. It seemed as if his power of speech in infancy had been rudely checked, or injured though fear or suffering, for at times his language was strange and unintelligible.

In a few minutes they reached the house, and leading the wondering child through the great hall, she opened the parlour-door, and led the boy into the room where Mrs.

Bond sat reading before a bright sea-coal fire. As the boy advanced into the room, Mrs. Bond laid aside her book, and looked up into the child's face, and as she did so, she exclaimed with a heightened colour—

"God bless me, Hannah, is this the boy! It's scarcely possible—and yet—what a striking resemblance. Come here, my dear child."

Getting up, with a good deal of agitation in her manner, she took the surprised child by the hand, and sitting down, pushed the curling hair from his forehead, gazed long and anxiously into his face, till the tears came into her own eyes; and stooping down she kissed the boy, saying to the wondering Hannah—

"This is no delusion, I cannot be deceived. The likeness is too remarkable, infinitely too great to be the effect of chance, or a caprice of nature. Go up stairs, Hannah, and in my casket you will see two miniature cases, bring them down."

As Hannah left the room, Mrs. Bond caressed the child to re-assure him, for his eyes wandered strangely and inquiringly round the room; the handsome furniture, the costly decorations, even the elegant attire of Mrs. Bond herself, seemed to excite some new and strange feeling in his breast. Mrs. Bond thought the child felt an awe of her and the things about him, but such was not the case; it was his memory, struggling through the cloud of years of suffering and neglect. It was a vision of the past, recalled by the sight of the things surrounding him, now first brought before his sight since the period of his abduction. The spell was on his young heart, and it held him as it were entranced.

"My poor child," said Mrs. Bond, "you are very thin; do you know how old you are?"

"Old," repeated the boy, with a look of surprise, and then shaking his little head, he replied: "no ma'am."

"Do you know what a year is?"

"Yes, ma'am; winter and summer is a year."

"How many winters, my child, do you remember since you were taken to live with those bad people?"

The child seemed to shrink, and he repeated "winters," and then with the tears in his eyes, he looked into the fine intellectual features of Mrs. Bond, saying—

"It was always winter to me, ma'am."

Just then Hannah returned with the two miniature cases, and handed them to her mistress. Opening one of them with a little nervous agitation, Mrs. Bond said—

"This is a striking likeness of my poor brother, at the age of sixteen. The other drawn about twelve months before his melancholy death."

"Lord, a' mercy, ma'am," exclaimed Hannah, with a start as her gaze rested on the exposed miniatures, "it's the very image of this child, the same eyes, the same hair, and the same sad expression of countenance."

"Yes," said Mrs. Bond, in a low, sad tone of voice. "My heart surely has not deceived me; this boy is my ill-fated brother's child. Notwithstanding, it appears incredible. Such a perfect likeness in a mere stranger is quite impossible; besides, this child's age is the same, to all appearance, and he is a stolen child. The body found, so mutilated as to be only recognised by the garments, and buried as the heir of Tregannon, was that of an impostor."

While Mrs. Bond spoke, the child's eyes were never taken off the miniature, but the moment she opened the case of the other miniature, the child beheld Sir Henry Claude Tregannon, attired in the dress he usually wore, and one the boy was accustomed to see in his early infancy, he exclaimed, clasping his hands passionately—

"Oh! my papa! my own papa!"

And bursting into a flood of tears, he hid his face in Mrs. Bond's lap, sobbing loudly. That lady, with a pale cheek, looked at Hannah, and the astounded maid looked at her mistress.

"Can there be any doubt now, Hannah?" said Mrs. Bond, "that child's memory was roused at the sight of his father's features. A father who doted on him, and who every day had the child to play for hours in his study."

Thus in a moment was the happy past recalled to the cruelly ill-used child.

Kissing his cheek fondly, Mrs. Bond strove to bring him still more alive to the past, but he wanted the power to express what he thought. Still she was quite satisfied she had found her lost nephew—nothing should ever shake her belief in that.

Turning to Hannah, she said: "This is a very strange

and mysterious affair; till something more positive is discovered, I must request you will keep what you know a secret. I am sure I can trust you, my good girl, for I have had the experience of years in studying your character. This dear child I place under your care: get a bed put up in your room for him, and when Mr. Bond returns, we will consult together about this providential and most extraordinary discovery."

"You may depend on me, ma'am," said Hannah, wonderfully changed in opinion with respect to the child: and seeing that her mistress was buried in deep thought, she took the boy with her, and before two hours had passed, had quite won his little heart by her kindness and attention.

CHAPTER VI.

It was nearly six o'clock before Mr. Bond returned, and with him came Mr. Parks, a friendship of long standing existing between them. Mr. Bond had spent several hours on horseback with mounted constables, endeavouring to discover some trace of the highwaymen of the preceding night, but without success.

Out of the five persons captured by the constables, in the morning, not one could be positively sworn to by any of the parties robbed. They were, however, detained until they could be confronted with Mr. Stephens, the gentleman whose horse was shot, and himself robbed and much hurt.

During dinner nothing was said relative to the child, as Mrs Bond did not wish to begin the conversation till the servants had retired, leaving them to their dessert and wine.

"Well, my dear," said Mr. Bond, "now that we are to ourselves, let me hear what your opinion is of my intended *protégé*. I have quite interested our friend Parks about him, and were it not so late, I would have him down here; his little handsome face so interested me."

Mrs. Bond, in a concise, but clear manner, related to her husband and Mr. Parks her interview with the child,

and her own positive conviction that she had under her roof! her own nephew, the heir of Tregannon.

"God bless my soul! Ellen," exclaimed Mr. Bond, in the greatest astonishment, "the child may have an extraordinary likeness to your poor brother, but it's quite impossible; recollect, your little nephew's body was found, recognised, and buried."

"I differ with you there, friend Bond," said Mr. Parks, who had listened to Mrs. Bond with great attention, "it's not at all impossible, it's extraordinary, certainly, but it happens that I was at Truro, concerned in that singular case of Admiral S——'s claims to the Trefuss's property, at the very time the unfortunate Sir Henry Claude Tregannon met his death, from accidentally taking, as it was said, an overdose of prussic acid. I felt particularly interested on hearing of that strange event, and the loss of the child at that period. There were four of us lawyers at Truro, at the time, and though opposed to each other in the case of Admiral S——s, we always dined together, and Sir Henry's strange death, and the loss of the child, engaged our attention and conversation. It also happened that Mr. Saunders, one of the four, was the very man employed in the forgery case against the Baronet's nephew—James Tregannon. As we talked the matter over, it forcibly struck us all, that there was something very mysterious in the Baronet's death, as well as in the loss of the child. The body was not found at this time, you see," continued the lawyer; "but, I beg pardon, I am engrossing all the conversation."

"Pray proceed, my good friend," said Mr. Bond, "for you are interesting me much, and causing my thoughts to revert to the past. Let us hear what you and your brethren of the long robe thought and said."

"The verdict of the coroner, you may remember," resumed Mr. Parks, "was, that the Baronet died from inadvertently taking an overdose of prussic acid. Now, Mr. Saunders, who is considered one of the keenest and cleverest men in the profession, was decidedly of opinion that the unfortunate Sir Henry never could have inadvertently taken so powerful a dose of prussic acid as to cause instantaneous death. He was in the habit, it seems, of taking one drop for a troublesome cough. He was well acquaint-

ted with poisons, so great a dose as he must have taken could not have been poured out drop by drop, or he would, no matter how preoccupied his mind might have been, have discovered what he was about. If he took it for the purpose of terminating his existence, why that frightful shriek, that roused his attendant and the rest of the family? Then, again, the Baronet's own man, at first, said he heard his master's door shut, at least he thought so, as he hurried along the corridor, but he contradicted himself afterwards, saying it must have been his imagination, for it was impossible such should be the case. Another curious, though apparently trivial circumstance, occurred. The stopper was in the crystal bottle that contained the prussic acid, and that was a very peculiar one, and could not be put in like a cork."

"And to what conclusion," interrupted Mr. Bond, "did these certainly somewhat singular circumstances lead you?"

"Why, one that will startle you, my good friend: that Sir Henry Tregannon neither took the poison inadvertently, or with the intention of ending his life. Recollect, he could have no motive in doing so. He could not, in four and twenty hours, have given up all hope of recovering his child—hope still remained to him, as a more extensive and strict search was ordered for the following day. The Baronet himself was known to express a firm conviction that the child was stolen, not drowned."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Mrs. Bond, turning very pale, as some thought or other flitted through her brain; "you have quite upset all my previous ideas with respect to my poor brother's death. You seem, my good friend, at least so I judge by your argument, to have an idea that my ill-fated brother met his death unfairly."

"Such, my dear madam, was the decision we all came to," said Mr. Parks. "In vain we racked our brains to solve the mystery—we could not investigate the affair—we had no right, and immediately afterwards we were fully occupied in the important cause which had brought us together. Just before I left Truro, I heard that the body of the unfortunate child had been found. This gave rise to fresh surmises, but it appeared that though the garments, etc., were easily recognisable, there was difficulty in iden-

tifying the body, the face and person were so mutilated by the action of the tides and by fishes and crabs; so when I left Truro and proceeded to London with my friend Saunders, to finish our law proceedings, I carried with me the conviction that the body found was *not* Sir Henry Tregannon's child.

"When I returned home, I did not like to discuss this subject with you, my dear madam, as I could see no good would arise by doing so, but now what you say with respect to this child my good friend here has taken so great a fancy to, and which you seem so determined to consider your lost nephew, induces me again to resume the subject, and I must ask you a few questions; for, you know, during my absence abroad I lost all trace, and indeed thoughts, concerning the poor child. In the first place, I presume, in default of a direct heir, that your scapegrace of a nephew, James Tregannon, succeeded to the title and property?"

"Exactly so," said Mr. Bond; "there was no one to dispute his claims; but you will be surprised when you hear that previously to gaining the property he married the eldest daughter of his attorney, a Mr. Stonehenge."

"God bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Parks, "married Stonehenge's daughter! Why it was Stonehenge that secured his acquittal when tried for forgery. There is something curious in that—that attorney would barter his soul for gold and station, though I have no right to say so, but such was the character he held. My dear madam," continued Mr. Parks, addressing Mrs. Bond, "I thought you told me some years ago that your nephew had a wife."

"So he had," returned the lady; "but of course she must have died."

"What became of your three nieces?" demanded Mr. Parks.

"The eldest, Miss Tregannon, the daughter of my brother's first wife, married Sir Charles Treacastle, having inherited her mother's fortune, a very considerable one. The two girls by his second wife were amply provided for by his marriage settlement; for my brother died without a will. I at once offered to take the two girls under my protection; but Lady Treacastle claimed their guardianship, and as the girls evinced a wish to be under her protection, I could make no objection."

"But here," said Mr. Bond, "comes the most extraordinary part of the business—just as Sir James was about to take possession of the estate of Tregannon, he was forced to fly the country, and very lucky he was to escape."

Mr. Parks looked greatly surprised, saying—

"How was that, friend?"

"The fact is," continued Mr. Bond, "painful as it is for us to relate—but with so old and firm a friend as you, we can have no reservation,—the fact is, the career of this man, James Tregannon, must have been one of the most depraved and vicious it is possible to conceive. It appears he was recognised by a constable of Leeds, a Cornish man, as an individual named Smith, under which name it seems he was connected with a notorious gang of coiners, who infested the towns of Leeds, Manchester, and Birmingham: he was also recognised as one of a gang of burglars who broke into a stockbroker's house in Leeds, and had nearly carried off a rich booty, but were surprised by this same constable and six others, who, though they failed in securing more than one of the number, distinctly recognised the coiner Smith; but being a strong and very active man, in a struggle with this constable, he overpowered him, inflicting a desperate gash on his head with a crow-bar, from which he was some time recovering. This man, as I said, a Cornish man by birth, happened to be visiting his family connexions in Falmouth, when James Tregannon, then Sir James, was passing the house he was in on horseback. 'By heavens! that's Smith the coiner,' exclaimed the constable, rushing out of the house into the street. It happened at that moment that James Tregannon looked back, and met the eyes of the constable eagerly fixed upon his person; he must have instantly recognised the man; for putting spurs to his horse, he galloped rapidly on, but not before the constable pointed him out to a shopkeeper who was standing at his door, saying—

"Do you know that person who passed on horseback?"

"Oh, yes, he is pretty well known here. It is Sir James Tregannon, of Tregannon Park."

"The constable laughed outright, saying:—

"Well, curse me, if that ain't a clincher! So, nothing but a baronetcy would do—where the devil has he raised the wind?"

"The shopkeeper stared at the constable, for not knowing him, or his motive for speaking as he did, he thought the man's words most extraordinary. But Trelawney, the name of the Leeds constable, was a keen, quick-witted, active officer, and knew there was a large reward offered for the apprehension of Smith, and another man, whose name I forget, and it was impossible to shake his conviction, that the man who passed him on horseback was Smith. After a series of inquiries, he learned all about Sir James Tregannon, his having, when a young man, been tried for forgery, and acquitted, and that no one knew what became of him from the period of their acquittal, till his reappearance as Sir James Tregannon.

"The consequence of this discovery was, that the Baronet had to fly the country, leaving the attorney, Stonehenge, to take possession of the Tregannon property, with liberty to do what he pleased. And it is said Sir James and his wife are residing in France—of course the attorney, Stonehenge, remitting the revenues of the estates to him.

"While the constable lives, he will never be able to return; for we heard that Stonehenge had offered to pay a very large sum to hush up this matter; but Trelawney swears he will live to hang him yet, though he be a Baronet.

"Thus stands the affair, as far as we have been informed. In the beginning we had a good deal of correspondence concerning the Tregannon family, and the strange events that have occurred, but of late we have heard little or nothing. To-morrow, when you come here you will see the boy, and we shall have a better opportunity of judging of his strange resemblance to Mrs. Bond's brother, Sir Henry, and if we really think he is our nephew, we must take immediate steps to prove him so."

"Ah, my worthy friend," said the lawyer, with a smile, "it is easy to talk of taking steps, but we must have something more tangible to work upon than a striking resemblance—not worth a fig in a law court. I should like to catch that fellow called 'Black George,' the ruffian who so cruelly ill-treated the child. If we had hold of him, we might do something in earnest."

"We must offer a reward for his apprehension," said Mr. Bond; "at all events, I will send two active and clever

London officers to track the rascal; if he stays in the country they'll find him."

"Ah, if so, we shall gain a good starting-point,—in fact, his evidence alone, if he can be induced to give it, would perhaps settle the question at once."

"By-the-bye, Mr. Parks," said Mrs. Bond, "let me hear all about the stopping of the Axminster stage, last night. I was very sorry to hear that you were a sufferer by it."

"Well, not much of a sufferer, my dear madam," said the lawyer, with a merry laugh; "poor Mrs. Burfat, the rich lady butcheress, was melted to a good amount, I am sorry to say, for she is an excellent woman, though enormously fat. She positively, nearly smothered the two spinsters of Stagehill Terrace, the two Miss Trincherds, who, by-the-bye, are neither of them of Pharaoh's lean kind. You may fancy it was a tight fit, those three amiable women hedged on one seat of the Axminster stage."

Mrs. Bond smiled, saying,—

"Was there not a young gentleman—rather profusely decorated with jewellery—one of the passengers?"

"Yes, and by Jove, if I could have got hold of him, or that other tall fellow, his next neighbour in the coach, I would have had them arrested as suspicious characters. The fellow with the jewellery was decidedly a London pick-pocket; and the other, no doubt, was a highwayman, for the robber who first entered the coach instantly recognised him, saying, with an oath:—

"Ha, is this you?"

"And he then jumped out, and did not make his appearance again, when the coach was permitted to resume its journey. I got a glimpse of his countenance, however, and a remarkable one it was; the light of the lamp fell full upon it for a minute, and I looked keenly at him, being struck by the robber's words."

"What kind of man was he?" demanded Mr. Bond, "for two men were traced to Charmouth, and hired a boat there, a fishing smack, but where they went to, we cannot yet discover; for the fishing boat, with three men and a boy in her, has not yet returned; but, I fancy those two men were the highwayman and the confederate or comrade you had in the coach."

"I dare say the same persons," remarked Mr. Parks,

"the robber wore a piece of crape over his face, therefore as to his features I can say nothing. In person he was a tall powerful man, and so was the other; in years, between thirty and forty, aquiline nose, very dark eyes and hair, sallow complexion, and what struck me, was a singular long livid mark, reaching from the corner of the left eye towards the left ear."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mrs. Bond, in a startled voice, "my miserable nephew, James Tregannon, has that identical remark; it was caused by a fall from his horse, when very young, hunting. It was a deep incision, and was sewed up, but a strange long narrow mark of a livid colour always remained. Besides, your description exactly answers his person; his eyebrows were also somewhat remarkable, projecting much, and very dark and bushy."

"By Jingo, that's the man!" said the lawyer with great vivacity. "It must be that other rascal—beg pardon, my dear madam, for using such a word in reference to your nephew; but that other, no doubt, was the gipsy tinker, 'Black George,' the child heard planning the robbery."

"It will be difficult to trace their route," said Mr. Bond, "for by the time the boat returns, they will, doubtless, have left the place where the smack took them. Now this confirms me in Mrs. Bond's assertion, that the child is her nephew, and if so, James Tregannon was the man that caused him to be stolen."

"Yes," put in the lawyer; "and that gipsy, George, was the rascal employed to do it; the plot thickens, but to unravel it will be difficult. We must catch that Black George, without him we are quite powerless."

Mr. Parks left rather late, promising to return the next day to see the child thus strangely introduced under the hospitable roof of his own relatives.

CHAPTER VII.

THE following morning our little hero was introduced into the presence of the warm-hearted Mr. Bond. Even one night of repose and kindness performed wonders for the

poor child. In truth, kindness was very new to him, and his little heart, naturally fond and grateful, was full of love for those who had thus rescued him from a life of misery and degradation. Mrs. Bond kissed him with fond affection, while her husband gazed alternately at the child and the miniatures placed on the table.

"You are right, Ellen—quite right, I am sure!" he said, after a silence of some moments; "this is no chance resemblance—this is powerfully striking—the boy bears in his little features all the singular characteristics of his race; but, as my old friend Parks says, resemblance is not worth a fig in a law-court. However, till something turns up, or we gain some further clue, he shall be reared as my nephew, and take my name; and, if the worst comes to the worst, he shall inherit all I can save henceforth out of my income. The Grange estate, you know, goes at my death, default of male heir," and Mr. Bond sighed in spite of himself, "to that rascally, miserly wretch, my cousin, Curtis Bond, who has already ten times more than he ought to have; and he will have the power to will it to whom he pleases. God forgive me, he's no use in the world. If I survive him, the power will be mine to will it; but, confound him, he's fifteen years my junior. It's one comfort, however, that villanous nephew of ours, James Tregannon, will not get it."

"I trust in God, my love," said Mrs. Bond, patting the cheek of the child, "that the difficulties in our way may be got over, and that this sweet and cruelly-used child may regain its rights, and that for many, many years, my beloved Harry, you will be spared to us."

"I hope so, my dear," said Mr. Bond; "but let us look to the present, and leave the future in the hands of an All-wise and Omnipotent Judge. Ha! there is Parks coming up the avenue."

A few words are here necessary concerning the worthy and kind-hearted lawyer, Mr. Parks. He was a bachelor, in his forty-eighth year; by his own abilities and exertions he had amassed a considerable property, and purchased a very handsome villa residence near his native town, Lyme Regis, within less than a quarter of a mile of Grange House. He had a younger brother, a barrister, residing in London, with a very large family, mainly dependent on the liberal

and generous lawyer, for he had neither the abilities or perseverance necessary to make a figure or a fortune in the profession he had embraced. One of his elder daughters resided with her uncle, a very amiable and handsome girl, just turned eighteen, and to whom Mr. Parks was much attached, having, in fact, reared her from a mere child. A steady housekeeper, two female domestics, and two men-servants, formed Mr. Parks's establishment at Bellevue Cottage.

We now resume our narrative: Mr. Parks, on entering the room, found his friend, Mr. Bond, with little Harry on his knee, trying, by adopting his language to the child's comprehension, to bring his little mind to bear upon the past. He had succeeded in fixing his attention; and some few observations the child made convinced him that his recollection would perhaps return by degrees. Mr. Parks was astonished at the extraordinary resemblance the child bore to the two miniatures, and much interested by his singular beauty and engaging manner.

"This poor boy is strangely backward for his age," said Mr. Parks. "No doubt, he has been purposely treated with cruelty and neglect to drive away all recollection of his early years; but I still think, as you both do, that there is no doubt as to his origin. As it now stands, it will be a puzzling case for a lawyer to make anything of; indeed, it would be worse than useless, on such shallow grounds as we possess, to dispute the succession of James Tregannon, especially since there was a body actually found and dressed in the lost child's garments, and recognised by many as the heir of Tregannon, especially by the governess, Miss Pritchard. Have you remarked that there are three letters—'H.C.T.,' and the year '178—,' burnt into this boy's shoulder with gunpowder and some composition that gipsies and sailors use for tattooing themselves with? Those three letters stand curiously enough for Henry Claude Tregannon, and the villain that stole him must have done it to recognise him, or for some purpose of his own."

"Those letters were certainly never on the child before he was stolen," said Mrs. Bond. "I remember hearing my poor brother's head gardener, who was a great favourite, and a highly respectable and superior man of his

class, positively deny that the body found was that of young Claude Tregannon, that he had a mark on his left arm, from a severe cut, and the body found had no such mark. One of the female attendants too, who had the care of the child on that unfortunate day, and who has never been herself since, also declared that the body found was not her master's child. However, so contradictory were the opinions, that Sir Charles Treacastle became satisfied by taking the plurality of assertions, and the body was buried as that of the heir of Tregannon. I wrote immediately to my niece, Lady Treacastle, but, strange to say, though a most amiable woman, she never evinced any desire to keep up an intimacy with me after my marriage. However, she answered my letter very kindly, but stated she felt quite satisfied that her unfortunate little brother perished by falling into the river, and that the body found was undoubtedly his. She spoke very feelingly of my illness, for I was very ill at the time, and unable for some time after to leave my room. It was that illness which prevented my at once leaving this for Tregannon. Mr. Bond attended at the funeral of my unfortunate brother, but was not at that of the supposed heir."

"Well, my conviction is," said the lawyer, "that we had better make no stir in this matter at present. The villain who had this child in his power will not dare to make any inquiries about him; besides, being concerned in the robbery of the coach, he would fear the child's recognising him. You must try and get hold of him," he continued, addressing Mr. Bond. "It was a most providential circumstance, your falling in with the dear boy as you did, and you must watch carefully, that they do not attempt to steal him again."

To this arrangement Mr. and Mrs. Bond willingly agreed. The lady, satisfied that her nephew was rescued from a life of misery and degradation, left the restoration of his rights to time and Providence; and Mr. Bond was delighted with his engaging and handsome *protégé*.

On the return of the fishing boat to Charmouth, Mr. Bond had the men brought before him. On questioning them, they declared that a gentleman, and only one gentleman, had engaged them, for a round sum, to sail for Guernsey, and land him there, which they did, and returned im-

mediately after doing so, but they knew nothing whatever about him, and readily took their oaths that there was but one, and very accurately described him, proving that he was the same person Mr. Parks had travelled from Bridport with. This intelligence induced Mr. Bond to send an active police constable to hunt for some trace of Black George, but after three weeks' diligent search, no trace whatever could be discovered. The five men taken up on suspicion were finally released, as no positive proof could be brought against them.

In a few weeks, everything in and about Grange House fell into its usual train, and little Harry Bond soon became a prodigious favourite with every one, but especially of Hannah's, who, when abroad, scarcely ever let him out of her sight.

We must now, gentle reader, change our scene, and return to Tregannon Mansion, some seven or eight weeks after the reception of Harry into the family of Mr. Bond. Very little, if any, change had taken place in either the park, or the mansion, as far as external appearance went. The fact is, some time elapsed before Mr. Stonehenge thought fit to permit Sir James to make his appearance after his hastily concluded marriage with his eldest daughter. He advised his going abroad for a time, to allow the talk his succession would cause to subside; besides, there were numerous debts to pay, for Mr. Stonehenge did not consider it becoming in the heir to plead the statute of limitation, to save himself from his liabilities. Neither was Mr. Stonehenge aware of the acts of his son-in-law's early life; he knew nothing, at all events, of a large reward having been offered for his apprehension, as coiner and burglar, under the name of Smith; that part of his career he kept to himself, though the attorney suspected there were secrets hid from him, but not so fatal a one as he learned afterwards, when too late.

Mr. Stonehenge had found little difficulty in persuading his eldest daughter to accept the Baronet; she was even more ambitious than her father, and eagerly grasped at the gilded bait held out to her. That her father possessed some secret power over Sir James Tregannon, she was keen enough to perceive; but as it was turned to her advantage, she troubled herself very little about it;

she was a woman of a strong masculine mind, and in a short time acquired considerable influence over her husband. She perceived that at times he was moody, sullen, and subject to terrible fits of dejection, and when so, drank hard. She had no affection for him, nor indeed was it possible she could. Another thing she discovered, that puzzled and perplexed her,—her husband detested her father, and yet he did what he pleased—managed the estate, and dictated to Sir James whatever he considered it necessary he should do; and the Baronet did it, but cursed the dictator.

Rosa, the youngest and prettiest of the attorney's two daughters, was an amiable and sweet-tempered girl, somewhat romantic, but sincere and true-hearted; she beheld, with astonishment, the marriage of her sister with Sir James Tregannon; she abhorred the sight of the man, and openly, to her father's great vexation and anger, declared her sister would yet be bitterly sorry for uniting herself to a man gloomy and abstracted at times, and whose previous life was so disgraceful.

Mrs. Stonehenge was silent; she never had much influence with her husband; she loved quiet and comfort, and when the entire family went to reside at Tregannon House, the elegance and style of every thing quite charmed her. Not one of the late Baronet's servants or attendants were retained. Mrs. Stonehenge replaced them with others of her own selecting.

At length Sir James and Lady Tregannon returned from a sojourn of some time in Germany, and took up their residence in Tregannon House. Scarcely three weeks had elapsed before he was recognised by the Leeds' constable in riding through Falmouth. He was then forced to reveal to his father-in-law this new danger that hung over him.

To his surprise the attorney did not express any great astonishment or commiseration, but coolly told him he must quit the kingdom, proceed to France, and there reside till he could come to terms with the constable and buy him off.

Sir James and his astonished wife, who could not understand this new freak of her husband's, therefore hastily left Tregannon. She was to proceed with her own attendants to Dover, and embark for Calais, where Sir James promised to join her; this was all the explanation he gave:

and they parted; but her father told her that her husband's life was in danger, and on no account to permit him to return to England, without he, Mr. Stonehenge, wrote to them to do so.

Lady Tregannon liked France; she had passed through Paris on her previous journey into Germany; she therefore felt quite satisfied at the prospect of residing in, and enjoying all the luxuries of, that gay city.

Thus at the period of our return at the opening of this chapter to Tregannon Mansion, it was only inhabited by Mr. Stonehenge, his wife and youngest daughter.

We now introduce our readers into the library of Tregannon House. It had struck the hour of ten at night, and Mr. Stonehenge sat at a table on which were many papers. There was a blazing coal fire in the grate, for it was a bitterly cold December night, and the blaze of the fire as it flashed upon the rich gilding and ornaments of the very handsome room, gave a very comfortable look to the chamber, especially as a strong south-west gale, with occasional heavy showers, beat against the windows. A shaded lamp stood upon the table, throwing its light on the papers lying before the attorney.

Mr. Stonehenge seemed plunged in profound meditation; he was not the Mr. Stonehenge with the round, jovial, ruddy face introduced to our readers some five years back, when living on the Marine Parade, Plymouth, but haggard and careworn; his hair nearly white, with a canker worm at his heart, preying upon him and rendering his life, at times, almost a burden to him. He had bartered his peace of mind for gold, for though he often said to himself: 'I have committed no crime,' yet an inward monitor whispered: 'you have allowed another to do so, and aided him in escaping the punishment due to his guilt.'

The knowledge too that he had united his daughter to a man capable of any crime, at times tormented him, and yet, with all his astuteness, he knew but little of the terrible guilt of his titled son-in-law. Still the style and affluence in which he lived was dear to him—he could not give it up. No, he had sacrificed his peace sooner than give up the position, he was ready to plunge even into greater crime. Such is ever the consequence of yielding one single step to the tempter.

Mr. Stonehenge was roused from his reverie by the entrance of his old attendant, John, still a privileged domestic. .

"Please, sir, there is a great big fellow below, in a miner's dress, insists on seeing you. I told him this was no time to come, and he told me to go to the devil and deliver his message."

"Ah," said Mr. Stonehenge, with a forced smile, "they are a rough lot, those miners; I expected a captain of one of the mines this morning, and I suppose he could only come at this hour. Shew him in here; bring him up the private stairs."

"I don't think," remarked John with the privilege of an old domestic, "that he is a captain of a mine—he's a terrible rough fellow. I wanted to shut the door and leave him outside, but he pushed it back, saying he'd break every bone in my carcase if I didn't be off and deliver his message."

Mr. Stonehenge turned a little pale, saying—

"Do as I bid you—these men are rough, but honest."

John rubbed his nose, doubted, and departed. The master of Tregannon, for such he might fairly be styled, sighed, muttered something about old times, wished that he was still living on the Marine Parade, and had never picked up the crumpled piece of paper that had led to his daughter's becoming Lady Tregannon, and the loss of his own peace of mind.

In the midst of the reflections, the door was thrown open, and John ushered in the Cornish miner, with a look of considerable disgust. He was, in truth, a tall, powerful man, over six feet, and as John retired, he very deliberately walked to the door, opened it, and looked out into the corridor.

Mr. Stonehenge started and looked at his visitor with a very uncomfortable feeling. The man closed the door, and the key being inside, very deliberately locked it. The attorney started up, saying, sharply—

"How is this? What means this liberty, to call it by no other name?"

"Oh, indeed," said the visitor, with a laugh, "call it any other name you like, it won't offend me; you and I will soon understand each other."

Mr. Stonehenge could only see the eyes of the stranger, the rest of his face was hid beneath an immense red woollen wrapper, and his person covered by a long miner's frock; but the eyes he did see, met his with a glance that made the attorney quail, and without a word he sank back into his chair.

The stranger unwound the wrapper and threw it aside, and pushing back the dark mass of hair that covered his forehead, disclosed the features of the man called Black George, whom we once before introduced to our readers on the moor above Charmouth and Lyme Regis.

"Who are you?" exclaimed Mr. Stonehenge, after regarding the stranger for a moment with fixed attention. "I have never seen you before. How is this—I expected a very different person."

"You are right," exclaimed the stranger, coolly seating himself, "I do not think you ever had that pleasure, but do not be alarmed,—I come here to serve you, as well as myself; in fact, the business I have with you requires great caution, and no eaves-droppers. I suppose you are aware that the child——."

At the mention of the word "child," Mr. Stonehenge started from his chair, as if a congreve rocket had burst beneath it. He stood gazing at his terrible visitor for several moments, without the power to speak.

"You seem amazed, Mr. Stonehenge," said Black George, with perfect composure, "at my mentioning the child—I mean, of course, the heir of Tregannon."

The attorney sat down, pale as death, the perspiration standing upon his forehead. Again, as he looked at the man's face, he started, for its expression was entirely changed; he had, it seemed, some strange power over his features; he had pushed back the dark masses of hair from his high broad forehead—his brows no longer met, and a strange smile sat upon his lip; he no longer looked ferocious, he even might be said to be a handsome man, of a peculiar stamp.

"You seem, Mr. Stonehenge," resumed the stranger, "to be either bewildered or to wish to appear so. Now, it is absolutely necessary that we should understand each other before we part. Let me ask you, first of all—did you really suppose the body of the child, found in the River

Fal, was that of the late Sir Henry Claude Tregannon's son."

Wiping the perspiration from his forehead, Mr. Stonehenge, in a very agitated voice, said—

"What other supposition could I have? Every one considered the body found to be the lost child's. Whose else's could it be?"

"Oh! as to whose child it was," interrupted the stranger, with his keen eyes bent upon the attorney, "that's easily answered—the child was mine!"

"Good God!" exclaimed the miserable Mr. Stonehenge, who really was deceived in considering the body found to be the young heir's. He certainly knew his son-in-law stole the child, but James Tregannon told him that in crossing the river, the crazy punt upset, and that, with great difficulty, he saved his own and his wife's life, but that the child he could not save.

Whether the attorney thought he wilfully let the child be drowned, we cannot say, but he assuredly thought he *was drowned*; therefore, when his unknown visitor asserted that the body found was that of his own child, he felt a cruel pang of bitter disappointment, for he naturally supposed that the heir of Tregannon still lived, and that he had perilled body and soul for nothing but to plunge, perhaps, into greater crime.

Such were Mr. Stonehenge's thoughts, as he sat facing his cool and perfectly unconcerned visitor, who read, with ease, what was passing in the attorney's mind.

"All this," said Mr. Stonehenge, making an effort to recover himself, "overpowers me. When Sir James Tregannon married my daughter, I considered him the undoubted heir to this property. He was guilty of a great crime in stealing the child."

The attorney fidgetted in his chair, for he felt that the eyes of the stranger were searching every corner of his heart.

"Oh!" interrupted the visitor, in a dry, sneering tone, "if you want me to imagine that you are an injured and innocent man, you are quite mistaken. You are equally guilty with my worthy friend in consenting to rob—yes, *rob*, that's the word; it's an ugly one, certainly, but it's plain and easily understood. In consenting to hide the

guilt of your estimable son-in-law, and rob the heir of Tregannon of his rights, you became equally guilty; the law makes little difference between the conniver at imposture and the perpetrator. If your conscience smites you, say no, and in three days I will produce the heir of Tregannon, and make terms for myself."

As he said these words, he rose from his chair.

"Stay!" said Mr. Stonehenge, in a tone of great excitement. "Man or devil, which ever you are, do you want to ruin and hang us all?"

"Certainly not," resumed the man, reseating himself; "don't talk of hanging—it's unpleasant. I've had a long, stormy walk, and would willingly drink a glass of wine, brandy, or any other liquor, to your good health and our future intercourse, for we must pull together; and when you know all, you will admit that I have been cursedly ill-treated."

"Very good," returned the attorney, making a great effort to recover himself, and getting up, he opened a handsome garde-de-vin, and took out two richly-cut decanters full of spirits; these, and a curious antique glass, he placed on the table before his guest, saying, "Help yourself—I will listen to what you have to say."

"Come, this is doing the thing handsome. Splendid cut glass. No doubt the liquor is excellent," pouring out, as he spoke, nearly half a pint of pure brandy, which he swallowed without the slightest inconvenience. "A good and wholesome spirit," continued Black George; "it warms me after four hours' exposure to torrents of rain. I forgot to drink your health, but will do so next glass. Now, Mr. Stonehenge, to make things clear to you, and prove to you that I am acting fairly for both parties, I must trouble you with a short sketch of my early intercourse with the present Sir James Tregannon."

But this brief sketch must be given in our next chapter.

CHAPTER VIII.

"About ten or eleven years ago," began Black George, "I first met your son-in-law; it was on the Exeter race-

course. He was then a very young man, four or five years my junior. Who I am, or what my real name may be, it is quite unnecessary to inform you. I frequented the same society as James Tregannon. He kept three race-horses at this time, and backed them enormously and inconsiderately; he also played high. Our first meeting was at a gaming-table on the race-course, under a tent. I won a large sum from him. We soon became very intimate, and knowing that he would lose in the coming race, I taught him a way to save himself from his injudicious bets. We need not now, however, follow up our further acquaintance at this period. Three years after, he was tried for forgery. Had he followed my advice, he would never have been suspected. However, through your means, he was acquitted.

"The next time we meet was in Manchester; we were both married, and Dame Fortune had reduced us both to the lowest ebb. Some transactions I undertook in London, which did not exactly prosper, forced me to fly to the provinces. I could disguise myself in various ways, personate almost any character, and always had a singular power over my features, so that in one second I could so change the expression of my face as almost to defy detection."

As Black George said these words, Mr. Stonehenge looked up and almost sprang from his chair with a startled surprise. His visitor's face was fearfully changed. His nose, which was rather a large one, but straight and well-formed, was now twisted upwards, disclosing the nostrils, and completely distorting the countenance. One eye had disappeared, leaving only the white to be seen; altogether the effect was surprising and most unpleasant to behold. A hearty laugh from the attorney's strange guest restored his face to its usual appearance.

"You see, my good friend, you would be puzzled to swear to my identity, eh? That's only a trifling change, but enough to show you that, with the help of dress, I could baffle a Bow-street runner." He then continued, "I soon found out that James Tregannon and his wife were leagued with a gang of coiners. The men coined the false money, and the women passed it in the great towns. I joined this gang, and we should have made

a very lucrative business of it, but for one of our number turning informer.

"James Tregannon and I went with our wives to Leeds; we were not successful there; were completely blown upon, and nearly caught by half a score constables in a well planned scheme of mine. Had we succeeded, we intended to have fled the country, so hot was the pursuit after Smith (that was your son-in-law's *alias*) and myself. After these failures we joined a gang of gipsy tinkers. I had tried this dodge before, and was wide awake to their ways; but my friend was new to the trade—did not understand their slang, and was a shade too proud for soldering tin saucepans. At the expiration of three months, James Tregannon and his wife left us—I liked the life well enough and remained with the gang. I got a new name amongst the tinkers, from my black beard, which I kept long, and a thick coat of soot to hide my complexion."

Time rolled on, and in the course of our peregrinations about twenty of us, in gangs, travelled into Cornwall; we each had a donkey or two, and a small tent; those that were unmarried herded together. I need not tell you we were not always employed soldering kettles. In fact, we led a very jovial life, I assure you, and lived well, thanks to the neighbouring preserves and farm-yards, for we always selected a proper situation for our encampments, and had divers ways of communicating with each other.

"We encamped about two miles from Truro, at a mile or so distant from each other. At this time I had an only child, as fair and handsome a boy as any in the land—he was about three years old. One evening, very late, I was astonished at beholding James Tregannon and his wife approaching our tent; he looked miserably haggard, and his wife worse. She always drank hard; her passion for gin was her ruin. We had a long conference, but it will be sufficient to tell you that the result was that I struck my tent, and agreed to accompany him into the vicinity of Tregannon House, keeping the opposite side of the river where the country is very thinly populated, and for miles thickly wooded.

"James Tregannon's plan was to steal the only son of his uncle, Sir Henry Tregannon. He explained to me the infirmities his uncle laboured under, and declared that the

loss of the child would cause the Baronet's death; that he would then be the next heir to the Tregannon estate—and offered me five thousand pounds to proceed to America with the child, on my taking a fearful oath never to reveal to any human being the child's name. I jumped at this proposal, because I thought it possible a very large reward would be offered for the recovery of the child, even if it did not kill the Baronet, which I very much doubted. The five thousand pounds would enable me to quit this country and settle in America; to do which I was very anxious.

“The difficulty was to steal the child without incurring detection. This James Tregannon declared he could do, as he had for weeks been planning the affair, and had a place of concealment on the opposite side of the river, and an old shooting punt, in a muddy creek, that could be made available for crossing. Accordingly, I set out with my wife and child, and arriving at the place appointed, set up my tent on the borders of a little creek that the tide from the Fal ran into, and which was dry at low water. The shooting punt I patched up as well as I could. Within half-a-mile of us, James Tregannon and his wife took up their abode in a rather singular cave; I think it must have been the shaft of an old mine. He and his wife every day crossed the river, and lay concealed near Tregannon Park, waiting for a favourable opportunity to accomplish their purpose. I sometimes rambled as far as St. Justs or St. Mawes, doing a small job here and there. Tinkering requires very little genius, and few tools.

“One day, on my return from St. Justs, on entering my tent, I found my wife drunk and fast asleep, but the little boy was not there; thinking he might be with Tregannon's wife, in the cave, I went there—they were absent—I became alarmed—I ran back to the creek, from which I knew the tide ran violently. I do not wish, Mr. Stonehenge, to excite your sympathy; I am a man of crime, and one hard to soften, but that hour of my life in which I strove to find my child, for I tracked his little feet on the mud on the borders of the creek, was the bitterest I ever passed—I have never been the same man since—I have become more hardened and reckless. However, all I need say on this subject is, I never saw my child again—neither have I ever forgiven his mother. She was drunk, and the

child, I suppose, went out to the water's edge, and in trying, perhaps, to reach something floating, overreached himself, fell in, and was carried away by the ebbing tide.

"Three days after, James Tregannon succeeded in stealing the Baronet's heir, and getting it, without detection, to the cave. I went to St. Mawes the next day, leaving my wife in the cave with the Tregannons, lying close, while I went for provisions.

"On returning, I came round through St. Justs, and going into an alehouse for a pint of beer, was utterly astounded on hearing some people talking about the death of Sir Henry Claude Tregannon. Had James Tregannon deceived me, and murdered his uncle!"

Mr. Stonehenge shook as if with ague, and looked at Black George with an expression of intense anxiety.

"Such was my first impression," continued the attorney's companion. "I have said I am a man of crime and sin, but as yet no man's blood lies at my door. I would not, for the Baronet's wealth, have been an accomplice in his murder. As the conversation went on, I found I had wronged James Tregannon. The Baronet had poisoned himself by mistaking a dose of some poison or other he was in the habit of taking for an illness he had. Here was a sudden piece of intelligence for James Tregannon. I therefore hurried back to the cave, and informed them both of the news I had heard.

" 'I told you,' said James Tregannon, with a curious kind of laugh, 'that he would be sure to die or kill himself after the loss of the child.'

"I did not like this view of the case; it was a second-hand way of committing murder. If he knew his uncle would poison himself in despair, he was guilty of his death—I told him so—but he laughed at me, saying—

" 'I fear your conscience is too tender to accept my offer of the five thousand pounds—do you wish to draw back?' "

" 'Certainly not,' I replied; 'my part of the business is the taking care of the child—I will perform my part, if you will perform yours.'

" 'The day I become Sir James Tregannon,' he said, 'you shall receive the five thousand pounds, and then you leave this country for America.'

"Now I expected a deal of trouble with the child. He

appeared a fiery little fellow, and his beauty was remarkable. We stripped him and dressed him in some of my child's clothes, blacked his face with some walnut-juice and soot, and then myself and wife left the place, always travelling at night. Tregannon and his wife stayed behind in the cave.

"Some time would elapse before he would become possessed of the estates; he was not at all afraid of ever being recognised as the coiner and burglar Smith, for none of his former companions knew his real name except myself—and it was not at all likely any one would ever think of identifying Smith and Sir James Tregannon as one and the same person, even if a likeness was perceptible. He intended to go abroad for a year or two, and the great change there would be in his person and appearance would, he thought, baffle even the eyes of his old companions; but he was deceived, as you already know."

"How do you know that?" demanded Mr. Stonehenge, in a tone of surprise, "you have not seen Sir James."

"I saw him seven weeks ago," returned Black George; "but let me finish. My narrative already occupies too much time. I waited very patiently several months, thinking Sir James would fulfil his contract, but I had no intelligence from him. I left my wife and the boy in a safe place, and travelled back here. It was then I heard about the finding of the body of the late Baronet's child, and that it was recognised by its garments, and also by several of the domestics."

"It struck me at once, that the body found was my child's, and that James Tregannon and his wife had discovered the body after my departure, and dressed it in the young heir's clothes. It was a deep ruse; but I felt pleased that my poor child received Christian burial. I also discovered that James Tregannon was in Germany with his wife—your daughter. I was amazed—for I did not know he had lost his first wife. Thus there was no chance of my five thousand pounds till he should come back from Germany—for, recollect, I was not aware of the true nature of your connexion with him at that time."

Mr. Stonehenge did not venture to look up, so Black George continued, with a grim smile at the silent attorney—

"Until the child should lose all memory of the past, we

were forced to live and pitch our tents in remote and thinly inhabited districts. I was compelled to be cruel to the boy to break his spirit, and by keeping him in our tent, he gradually began to speak with a strange hesitation of manner; still it would not do, for two or three years, to let him out of my wife's sight. At last, I heard that Sir James Tregannon and his lady had returned to their estate. This was not, however, till two months after they had returned; and, by the time I got into Cornwall, I heard the news of his and his lady's departure again for the Continent; and the strange rumour, that he was suspected of having committed an act, for which he was forced to leave the country. That a constable from Leeds had publicly said—he could swear to Sir James Tregannon having at one time gone under the name of Smith, and that the said Smith belonged to a gang of coiners and burglars, who, some years back, infested the towns of Leeds, Manchester, and Birmingham. However, as Sir James was not to be found, the charge against him remained unproved. A great many people believed that the constable spoke the truth; some who knew but little of my worthy friend, said it was absurd nonsense to accuse a gentleman of such a crime because he happened to be like a man named Smith. At all events, I saw no chance of my five thousand pounds; and as he had not fulfilled his contract, I began to turn it in my brain how I might make the most of my secret.

“I returned to my wife, and the first thing I did was to take some gunpowder, and, with a needle, punctured in the boy's left shoulder the three letters—H. C. T., and under them the date 178—. This I did that I might know the boy, should I chance to lose him. As long as he lives he will carry that mark, in some shape or other, on his shoulder.

“I thus passed over nearly four years, rambling through various counties, not exactly knowing how to act with respect to the boy, for I did not know whether his relations would believe my story, or which was the safest way of informing them.

“At this time, just as I had made up my mind to apply by letter to Lady Trecastle, for I was well acquainted with the boy's history, and the whereabouts of his sisters, having learned all this from James Tregannon, I joined a party of my old associates going into Dorsetshire.

"I pitched my tent on a dreary moor not very far from Charmouth and Lyme Regis, and some ten or twelve of our gang located themselves a few miles apart. We intended to do a little business on the king's high-way, that mode of 'raising the wind' becoming fashionable again.

"We heard of a good catch, one night, in a gentleman who was returning to his mansion, near Lyme Regis, with nearly eight hundred pounds in his gig. We determined to stop him, but a comrade of mine, rather a wayward kind of a devil, insisted upon robbing the Axminster heavy stage, as one of our spies had gained intelligence that the rich butcher's wife at Axminster was returning from Bridport, with a couple of hundred pounds—I was against this, but was overruled."

Mr. Stonehenge shuddered as he ventured a timid glance at the strange guest he was thus suddenly associated with, who, however, now and then filled his glass and went on quite coolly with his narrative.

"We stopped the coach, and taking one of the lamps, I pulled the door open, and mounted the steps. As I did so, I saw the muzzle of a pistol within an inch of my head, but, at the same moment, the light of the lamp fell full upon the face of the individual holding the pistol. I beheld James Tregannon; a few words from me caused him to leap out of the coach, and leaving my comrades to complete their job, we walked on towards Charmouth.

"I suppose, Mr. Stonehenge," continued Black George, in a tone that forced that individual to look him in the face, "I need not repeat to you all the conversation I had with my old comrade. In his own vindication he declared that he was completely in your hands."

The attorney turned pale, and quailed under the keen inquisitive glance of the robber.

"That you had it in your power to silence the Leeds' constable, but——"

"On my honour," eagerly interrupted Mr. Stonehenge, "he wrongs me. I wrote him many letters on the subject, telling him it would be madness to tamper with this man, for, to offer to purchase his silence, would be to declare Sir James guilty, whereas, I have treated the whole affair with contempt; but still it forces him to live abroad, and, in fact, I cannot see how he could live at home; after the

unfortunate acts he committed in his youth, he would be shut out from all society."

"Humph!" muttered the robber, "perhaps so, but he says he cannot live on the amount you remit him."

"Cannot live," repeated the attorney, his face the colour of scarlet, "not live on five thousand a-year, for a few years, till his immense debts are paid off. He is a madman, receiving five thousand a-year, and not entitled to a shilling."

"Ha! I see," interrupted the highwayman.

"The plain matter-of-fact is this:" and he spoke in a cool, determined voice: "Three men join together to commit a great crime—Sir James Tregannon, Mr. Stonehenge, and your humble servant. The first gains a title and five thousand a-year, admitted. The second lives in a splendid mansion, with a train of domestics, and handles the amount between five thousand and fourteen thousand a-year. The third, running the greatest risk, with the burden of the stolen child on his hands, wanders about and earns his bread as a travelling tinker, and at times, a robber. Do not interrupt me, sir," continued Black George, with his terrible look, that made the attorney quail, "I have nearly finished. Now I ask you a plain question. When three men unite to commit an act by which a great gain is made, is it usual that only two profit by it?"

The man paused.

Mr. Stonehenge now experienced the consequences of crime, not exactly for the first time, but he felt that, henceforth, there would be neither security nor peace, and, in his own mind, he came to a sudden resolution; however, he looked up and said, calmly enough—

"I admit you have not been fairly treated; it was not my fault—Sir James ought to have made provision for his contract with you."

"Well," impatiently interrupted Black George, putting his hand into his pocket, and pulling out a folded paper, the attorney eying his proceedings with a wary eye, "Sir James, it seems, ventured from Paris to this country to have an interview with you. I do not want to know anything about your private affairs; he was going to Lyme Regis, to hire a boat to take him to Guernsey; we went together to Charmouth, and he hired a fishing smack to

take him to that place, and I saw him sail. Before he departed I insisted on his giving me an order on you for the sum of six thousand pounds."

"Six thousand pounds!" repeated Mr. Stonehenge, with a start; "I understood your agreement was for five thousand!"

"True—but I have waited four years for it; during those four years I might have doubled that sum in America, therefore, I insisted on six thousand pounds. How much, do you think, Mr. and Mrs. Bond would give for my secret?"

"Mr. and Mrs. Bond, of Grange House!" exclaimed the attorney, in a tone of intense alarm, as he fixed his eyes upon the undisturbed features of the robber.

"The same," returned Black George, enjoying the alarmed look of the master of Tregannon.

"Mrs. Bond is the child's aunt, and they are very wealthy."

"How soon must you have this money?" questioned Mr. Stonehenge, in a low, hesitating voice.

"There is a ship in Plymouth Sound," said the robber, "will sail for America to-morrow fortnight; I wish to embark in her, and quit this country for ever, and I will give you my oath, in any manner you please, that from my lips the secret of the boy's existence shall never be revealed. There is Sir James's order for the sum I mentioned," throwing the paper upon the table, "and I think, when you consider the part I have performed, and have to perform, you will acknowledge I am the worst paid of the three."

Anxious to get rid of his most unwelcome visitor, Mr. Stonehenge said—

"In three, say four days hence, I shall be ready with the money."

"Very good," said Black George, rising: "I shall be here punctually."

Mr. Stonehenge summoned his man John, who, with looks of considerable surprise, conducted the captain of the mine, as he was led to consider him, without the mansion, wishing him a pleasant walk home—a deluge of rain and sleet was pouring down at the time.

CHAPTER XI.

WE pass over a period of eight years, since the events recorded in our last chapter, a long period apparently to look forward to, but a mere nothing to plunge back into the past, for mind and thought travel with lightning speed.

Time had rolled on during those eight years, laying many in the tomb, bringing others to its brink, and letting childhood spring into youth, and youth into manhood.

We open our present chapter, then, in the spring of the year 180—, and find ourselves after this lapse of time in the pleasant and happy mansion of Grange House; there was no change there in external appearance; all was smiling and beautiful under the influence of a bountiful Providence, and a good and kind landlord.

The wide-spread lawn was throwing up its emerald colours; the noble trees were opening their buds into leaves, and the wide and glorious sea was rippling and sparkling, covered with barks, in the unclouded glories of a young May morning.

Mr. and Mrs. Bond, but lightly touched by the passage of those eight years, were seated in their favourite sitting-room, which commanded the bay and town of Lyme Regis; the windows were open, for the day was very beautiful, considering that the climate was England and the month May. Mr. Bond had his telescope in hand, he was gazing through it, out upon the rippling sea, from vessel to vessel he pointed his glass—till at last it rested on a beautiful cutter yacht coming up in short tacks from the Bill of Portland under all the sail she could crowd. She was beating up for Lyme, with a steady south-west wind.

“Ah! there she is, Ellen,” said Mr. Bond, turning the glass towards his fair partner; “She sails like a witch; and that dear boy handles her like a top. I must send William with the horses to meet him; he will reach in by the time they are there.”

So saying, Mr. Bond rose up and rang the bell, and forthwith ordered the groom to saddle Mr. Henry’s favourite horse, and proceed to Lyme, and wait the yacht’s arrival

“That is our friend Parks coming up the lawn,” said

Mrs. Bond ; "he told us yesterday if he had to leave for London to-night he would be here early, hoping to see Henry before his departure. I am glad, therefore, to see the yacht in sight."

"Ah! confound the law," muttered Mr. Bond, as he left the room ; "Parks gives the thing up. The last consultation of lawyers settled the case ; they all agreed that they firmly believed Harry to be the heir of Tregannon ; but notwithstanding the resemblance and the letters tattooed on his shoulder, and the boy's own memory of the past, the case would not do to bring into a law court. Thank God, your blessed—I beg your pardon, my love, for though he is a scoundrel, he is still your nephew—but thank God he cannot get a fraction out of the estate during his life—a devil of a mess his rascally attorney got him into."

So saying, Mr. Bond sallied out of the front door, and walked down the avenue to meet Mr. Parks, who came slowly up, reading a letter, and stopping every now and then to consider what he was reading.

"Well, I suppose you are off to-night for the great metropolis, Parks," said Mr. Bond, after a hearty shake of the hand. "There's the 'Water Witch,' beating up for the harbour ; Harry will be just in time to see you before your departure, as you hinted you may not be back for some months."

"Yes," returned Mr. Parks, "I saw the boat before I left the house. I am very glad that I shall see Harry, but do you know I have received, by this morning's post, a most extraordinary letter, in a female hand ; here it is. By Jupiter, I do not know what to make of it."

"What's it about?" asked Mr. Bond.

"Read it, old friend, read it, it's no secret—a nice pretty hand—is it not?"

Mr. Bond took the letter, and with some curiosity cast his eyes upon the writing. Using our privilege, we look over his shoulder and give our readers the contents of the letter, which was written in a fair small hand.

"SIR,

"On the point of quitting the shores of my native land, most probably for ever, I feel, in my heart, I cannot do so without easing my mind and conscience of a secret that oppresses me, and renders life almost painful ;

and yet there are reasons which prevent my disclosing this secret to you, in a manner that might render the disclosure infinitely more beneficial to the party whom it concerns. Still, if it does nothing else, it will relieve the minds of those generous individuals, Mr. and Mrs. Bond, from all doubt with respect to the child they have so nobly protected and cherished.

"I solemnly assure you, that the boy they received under their roof, and to whom they have given their name, is the only son and heir of the late Sir Henry Claude Tregannon, consequently their own nephew. The ill-fated boy was stolen from his home by James Tregannon and his first wife, and secreted in a cave for several days. This cave is, I believe, on the other side of the river to Tregannon House, about a mile down the stream, and close to a narrow muddy creek that the tide runs up. The child was then consigned over into the hands of a man, his name at that time I knew not, but at the period I discovered this secret he called himself Black George; he was an old comrade of James Tregannon's. This man was under the disguise of a gipsy tinker; he was to have five thousand pounds for taking the child to America on swearing never to reveal his name.

"The body of the child found and buried as the son of Sir Henry Tregannon, was the son of this man, Black George, which had been accidentally drowned. James Tregannon and his wife finding the face and person of the child much mutilated and disfigured, dressed it in the garments of the unfortunate heir of Tregannon, and as such it was buried. The man, Black George, with gunpowder and some composition, punctured on the stolen child's shoulder, the letters 'H. C. T.,' and the year and date.

"This man I understood sailed from Plymouth in the American bark, the 'Independence,' bound for New York. For several years I considered that he had taken the child with him, and that he could never be traced, and only a few months ago, discovered that the boy was actually under the roof of his own aunt, and that you, sir, and several eminent lawyers were about to bring his case into a court of law, and dispute the title of the present possessor of the estates. If therefore this statement, to which, unhappily,

I cannot affix my name, will serve the cause of the much-wronged heir of Tregannon, in my heart I thank God that I have made it, if not, I must only console myself with the reflection that I have done all I dare do under the circumstances in which I am placed. I can only sign myself,

“A SINCERE LOVER OF TRUTH AND JUSTICE.”

Mr. Bond read the letter from beginning to end, without pause or remark; having finished, he looked into the benevolent face of his friend Parks, saying—

“This is singular enough; who on earth do you suppose wrote this letter?”

“I have not the slightest idea, my good friend, but although I believe every word in it, I am sorry to say it would do no good to our cause. It would be called conspiracy, an anonymous letter is worthless. It bears the Cork post mark, therefore the writer is either in Ireland or has sailed thence by this time. It’s altogether very singular.”

“By Jove! Parks, there is one part of the letter may be turned to use.”

“What’s that?”

“Why, Henry and I will have a trip into Cornwall and have a hunt after that cave. Who knows what may turn up there.”

“True, it will be worth while, and can do no harm. By-the-bye, in a letter I had this morning from Saunders, he says: ‘that Stonehenge and his family succeeded in reaching Liverpool, and were just seven hours under weigh for America, when the party in chase reached Liverpool.’”

“How much was it,” demanded Mr. Bond in a musing tone, “that he contrived to raise in the name of James Tregannon?”

“Fifty thousand pounds,” returned Mr. Parks as they continued their walk round the lawn; “it will take eight or nine years and more to clear the estate. The creditors have agreed to allow that villain, James Tregannon, a thousand a year till the amount raised in his name is paid off; I do not quite understand how the thing was done, for though James Tregannon did actually authorise the raising of this sum, I cannot understand for what purpose, or what could induce this Stonehenge, who lived

at Tregannon as its master, to rob his employer and to escape with his plunder to America. By Jove, you have just put an idea into my head—Stonehenge had two daughters, had he not?”

“He had, or has,” returned Mr. Bond—“what then?”

“Why, it was a female that wrote this letter, and she states she was leaving her native land, and situated as she was, she could not give her name? by Jove, it’s not at all unlikely, but that Miss Stonehenge wrote it, especially as it could do her father no manner of injury.”

“But, my good friend, this bears the Cork post-mark, and quite a recent date, and you know Stonehenge must have sailed from Liverpool more than two months ago, at the least.”

The lawyer looked puzzled, and remained silently pondering over something. Mr. Bond cast a look over the sea, and then exclaimed—

“Ha! the ‘Water Witch’ will run in this tack; how vexed Harry would have been, if little Fan had left before his return.”

“By-the-way, I do not think I should have been able to induce little Fan to leave,” said Mr. Parks, “without Harry returned to bid her good-bye; she has been in a state of fever, looking out for the yacht; and see, she is coming in at the lodge-gate, with her bonnet hanging by its ribbons like the pennon of a king’s ship, and my niece Margaret, trying to keep up with her; I knew she would follow me, to be the first to see Harry. I never saw a child so attached and so affectionate in my life as Fan is to him—there is not a day since she has been staying with us that she does not talk of Harry’s devotion in risking his life in that terrible storm, to save hers; though only thirteen years old, she has at times the thoughts and ideas of sixteen, and yet withal as wild as a fawn.”

As Mr. Parks spoke, one of nature’s loveliest creation came bounding over the lawn towards them. The breeze had blown the bonnet from her head, but it was still held on by the ribbon round her neck—a profusion of rich auburn hair in natural ringlets was steaming in the breeze. She was tall for her age, her round Hebe face was full of health, of life, and joyous youth. Her dark blue eyes sparkled with animation, as bounding up to Mr. Bond, she almost sprang into his arms, saying—

"Ah! after all, here's Harry and the yacht, so I shall not have to go away without a good-bye. I saw the yacht first, and you," turning to Mr. Parks, "wanted to persuade me it was a Weymouth fishing-smack, as if I didn't know every sail and rope in her."

"You're a mad-cap, Fan," said Mr. Parks, laughing. "I knew the boat as well as you, but I wanted to get the start of you here, for I was sure, once you got here, that tongue of yours would banish all matters of business."

Mr. Bond, after kissing the beautiful girl's fair open forehead, turned to Miss Parks, a very handsome and amiable girl, though no longer in her first youth: "Well, Miss Margaret, I see, keeping up with your fair companion has added additional bloom to your cheek; it's a glorious day, is it not?"

"Oh! lovely," said Miss Parks, "I have been envying Harry his cruise from Weymouth; but as to keeping Fan in the house, after she got a glimpse of the 'Water Witch,' was out of the question—she bounded off like a mad thing."

Fan laughed, and seeing Mrs. Bond coming out to meet them, she ran to her, to talk about Harry's coming.

While waiting the arrival of young Harry Bond, as he was universally called by all who knew the family, we will acquaint our readers who was the young and beautiful girl we have just introduced to them, and how she came to be so much attached to Harry Bond, and also how she came to be under the roof of Mr. Parks, who was in no way related to her.

CHAPTER X.

At this period Henry Bond, as we must continue to style our hero for awhile, was in his eighteenth year. Every pains had been bestowed upon his education, and his abilities were great. He was returning from the vicinity of Weymouth, where he resided with a Mr. Woodhouse, who received half a dozen young gentlemen into his house to prepare them for one of the universities.

Within a few weeks of completing his studies with Mr.

Woodhouse, the terrible fever that in the following year committed such fearful ravages on that coast, broke out in the village adjoining Mr. Woodhouse's establishment, and two of the young gentlemen were attacked, and one died. Mr. Bond at once sent the yacht to Weymouth to bring Henry home.

He was as handsome and noble-looking a youth as any in the kingdom—tall and graceful—uniting great strength with immense activity; he excelled in all sports of the field—was a prodigious favourite with all the country gentlemen, for there was not a fox-hunter in Dorsetshire could compete with him. But though he loved the chase, the sea was his favourite element. From his very first introduction into the family of the kind-hearted Bonds, he showed a predilection for the sea, and in two or three years the passion grew stronger and stronger. At fourteen his feats with boats and in sailing the "Water Witch" astonished the hardy pilots and fishermen of Lyme and Charmouth.

Before he was sixteen, he had saved many lives from shipwreck by his daring, which continually filled the minds of his uncle and aunt with admiration and fear.

On the completion of his fifteenth year, one of his tutors, a Mr. Otley, a young man of delicate health, who had recently been appointed to the vicarage of St. Mary's in the Scilly islands, was on a visit to Mr. Bond's. A few days previous to his departure, Henry proposed taking him to St. Mary's in the "Water Witch," and the offer being warmly seconded by Mr. Bond, they sailed on the 27th of September, with the wind blowing fresh from the eastward, making a fine run as far as the Land's End, when the wind shifted, with evident symptoms of a terrific storm. Nevertheless, the "Water Witch" made her port the evening of the second day after leaving the Land's End, against a strong head-wind and heavy sea. The three following days, it blew a hurricane at sou'-west with a tremendous sea, accompanied with much thunder and lightning. The fifth day there appeared a lull, and the wind drawing more to the westward, Henry, after an affectionate leave-taking of his tutor, sailed for home, though most of the old pilots declared they were on the eve of a rougher gale from the south-east or east.

"It's only forty miles or so to Penzance," said Henry, "a mere three hours run with this wind ; and I do not think we shall have the gale so soon as all that."

The sea was still greatly agitated, and a tremendous ground-swell ran in on those fearful rocks, where perished the gallant Sir Cloudesley Shovel and his noble ships. For two hours the "Water Witch" ran with a fair but very light breeze some eight or ten miles, when it fell stark calm, with a slight fog, and a heavy lowering sky.

"We are sure to catch it, Master Harry, some time to-night," said Mr. Seabright, the skipper of the yacht, an old man-of-war's man and thorough seaman, and who had been a great favourite with Mr. Bond for many years.

"Well, my old friend, if we do catch it," said Henry Bond, in reply to the observation of the old skipper, "we must grin and bear it ; it's not the first gale the old girl has sprinkled her decks in."

"No, please God, Master Harry, nor the last I hope. But this here channel is a ticklish sort of a place to be lying in with such a tumble of a sea, and a threatening sky overhead. It would be just as well to lower our main-sail, secure our boom, which is knocking about a precious rate, and set our try-sail, we shall then be snug for the night, whatever comes."

"I am quite of your opinion, William," said Henry, who always gave way to the old tar's wishes, as he knew he was not only a first-rate seamen, but as hardy and daring a one as need be, when circumstances required it.

It was near sun-set, the yacht was rolling heavily in a rapidly increasing sea, and a thick dense fog lay upon the face of the water, but not a breath of air was stirring. The great boom of the cutter was soon secured, her try-sail hoisted, her bowsprit run in, and a second gib set, so that, come what might, they would at least not be caught napping.

Our hero retired to the handsome cabin of the yacht, and invited the skipper to a cup of tea, or a glass of grog, for the old salt generally entertained his favourite with a yarn of some kind, either one of his own adventures or one that he had heard.

Mr. Seabright preferred a stiff glass of grog to a cup of tea.

"Well, William," said Henry, as he sat with his tea equipage, secured on the table, for the yacht rolled heavily

at times, "we are not likely to have a breeze before morning."

"It's mortal thick and hazy," said the old seaman, mixing his potation. "There's no trusting this here place, no more than my old cruizing ground, the gulf of Lyons—you may run in in the morning under royals, and be deuced glad to be scudding out before night, under a storm stay-sail, or lose your masts, as we did in the old brig."

"You never told me about that adventure, William. I like to hear all kinds of yarns; tell me how you lost your masts in the stormy gulf of Lyons."

"With all my heart, Master Harry, though it's not much of a yarn—though I nearly lost my life at the time; but here goes."

And swallowing half the contents of the tumbler, the old seaman began—

"I was about five or six and twenty at this time, and was then a seaman on board the 'Spitfire,' ten-gun brig, though them there craft were not thought much of, being dangerous and uncomfortable for the crew, yet the little 'Spitfire' was a jolly little craft of her kind, with good beam, stood up to her canvas like a crutch, and sailed like a witch—perhaps she was rather overmasted. Her captain was as good a seaman as ever stepped on board a three-decker—he had a smart crew, and all pulled well together. We were sent to cruize, by Captain R—— of the Thunderer, the commander on the station off the gulf of Lyons, to keep a look-out for three French ships, thought to be lying under Fort G——, where a number of gun-boats were kept."

"Well, it was the month of September, and the weather was clear and fine. Our Captain resolved to stand into the Gulf till within sight of Fort G——. There was a bright blue sky, and a nice light breeze from the south-west. We stood into the Gulf, under topgallant sails and royals, making about eight knots an hour. We were just abreast of Cape Antoine, about six miles off, when we saw a small speck of a cloud settle on the high point of the Cape, and in a minute it grew as big as our mainsail, and then disappeared. Our Captain was walking the deck, with his telescope in hand, and at times looking beyond the Cape. Suddenly he called out—

“‘Away aloft, and furl the royals, and topgallant-sails.’

“I was one of the number that ran aloft. My eyes! just as I reached the topgallant-yard, I saw coming out of the Gulf; like a race-horse, a white squall; the sea was a sheet of snow-white foam, tossed wildly into the air; all hands were called upon deck, but before the stunsails were taken in, or the topgallant-sails furled, the white squall was upon us. Crack went the booms, then the topgallant-masts; the brig taken aback, heeled over fearfully, till her yards touched the foaming water; unfortunately for me, I was slipping down a rope, and the sudden heel overthrew me off my hold, and pitched me into the foaming waters; hencoops and all kinds of things were hurled in by those who saw me fall overboard; the next moment crack went the brig’s foremast and forestay, and then the mainmast and all its gear, such a tremendous squall I believe none aboard ever witnessed. As for myself, for the moment, I was stupified; but as I rose to the surface, I came against a very large hencoop, which I grasped and clung to, with the hold of an oyster, rolling over and over two or three times, till I got astride on it. I couldn’t see a yard before me; I did not know then that the brig had lost both her masts, for the sea resembled a snow drift. I was aware that these white squalls of the Mediterranean seldom lasted beyond half an hour or so—it’s their first blast that does the mischief, often not only unmastering vessels, but often turning them over, and causing them to founder; I held on like grim death, Master Harry—it was no joke. The wind was terrific, and the sea like a cauldron of boiling water; but in twenty minutes or so the great fury of the squall passed on, and in ten minutes more I lay rolling and tossing on the sea, with scarcely as much wind as would serve to fill a skysail. I could see the squall on before me, and you may imagine how eagerly I looked to get a sight of the brig; but no brig was to be seen. In half an hour more I lay upon my hencoop, the sea as calm as a sleeping infant, the sky perfectly unclouded, and the sun shining as pleasantly as if no squall had occurred.

“I soon began to find my birth on the hencoop rather a doubtful one for passing the night on. I did not alto-

gether despair; but I must confess I had little hope of rescue; for the crew no doubt thought I had perished, and not a single sail could I see over the vast extent of ocean. To me the land was invisible, though only fourteen miles distant. The sea, luckily, was as smooth as a mirror, and my craft, the hencoop, was over twenty feet long, the least roll of a sea would have forced me to keep half my body in the water, thereby tempting some hungry shark to make a meal of it. When the sun set, the wind came out from the Spanish coast, but only a pleasant night breeze. I was not cold, though occasionally my feet to the knees remained in the water. As hour after hour passed, I wondered if I should be able to hold on till daylight, still I trusted in Providence, determined to struggle to the last.

"About four or five hours after sunset, I fancied I beheld two or three white objects like sails between me and the land. It struck me that they might be the French gun-boats I knew were lying at anchor under the batteries of Fort G——. They often put to sea at night to have a look out at early dawn. They were latine rigged craft, carried one desperately long gun, and sailed uncommonly fast. My heart beat with joy when I fairly distinguished the latine sail of one of them, though I knew I should become a prisoner; but life is life—I might get out of a French prison, but never out of 'Davy Jones's Locker.' I kept my eyes fixed upon the sail; it came right before the wind, and the way the boat was steering she would surely pass within hail.

"It was not a moonlight night, but a bright, clear, starlight. Presently I could distinguish the hull. She carried one huge latine sail and a small jib, and was running dead before the wind, which was light. I judged she would pass within a hundred yards of me; even at that distance she might not see me; so, when I considered her near enough to make myself heard, I hailed at the top of my voice, but received no reply for several minutes. At last I observed the gun-boat round up in the wind, and several voices in French hailed. I shouted out again, and after a time they made me out. In a few minutes she was close alongside my craft, and, throwing me a rope, amidst a volley of words, not one of which I understood, I scrambled on board, but so stiff in my

lower timbers, that I fell down on the deck, thanking God heartily for my unlooked-for preservation. I could make out that they knew I was an Englishman, for they said frequently, 'Anglais;' and presently one of the crew came up, holding a lanthorn, and said to me in tolerable English—

" 'You Englishman? where come from? what ship?'

" 'The jolly little 'Spitfire,' my hearties,' says I; 'and blessings on you for saving my life.'

" 'Oh!' said the interpreter, 'he is from the Got dam brig. What you do on the hencoop?'

" 'I contrived to get upon my legs by this time; so I answered that I fell overboard in the squall, and that my messmates threw me the hencoop to keep me up.'

" 'Got dam!' said the man, 'what for they no pick you up?—very bad.'

" 'Bad enough, my friend,' said I; 'I suppose the brig carried away something in the squall.'

" 'Well, never mind—you prisoner, but no harm—plenty eat and drink, and dry clothes—come along with me.'

" 'Well, this was decent treatment enough; so I followed my friend into the fore-cabin, and the Frenchman lent me a change while my own clothes were drying. I got a stiff glass of brandy and some food, and was then allowed to lie down to recover myself, till morning, when I was to be overhauled by the Captain to answer some questions.'

" 'In the morning I felt little the worse for my mishap. I heard a great commotion above, men running backwards and forwards, so I jumped up and made my way on deck—nobody seemed to mind me; but on looking about me, I saw that all hands were busy in getting their long swivel gun ready for action. It was a fine, clear morning, and a nice breeze. On looking over the side, I saw, about three or four miles to leeward of us, our little brig, the 'Spitfire.' She was under jury-masts, and was evidently getting up jury, topmasts, and yards. My friend of the previous night came up to me, and pointing to the 'Spitfire,' said—

" 'That your ship, eh?'

" 'Yes,' said I, 'that's the craft; she was dismasted

in the squall yesterday—that was the reason they could not pick me up.’

“‘You come to our Captain; he want to ask you questions,’ said the French sailor.

“So I followed him aft, casting a look at the huge gun that worked on a pivot, which I knew would carry nearly twice as far as any of the guns in the brig, and I guessed also what they intended to do; for on looking aft, I perceived another gun-boat in the wake of the one I was in. The brig being crippled, and unable to set sail for a few hours, these boats would be terrible customers, with their long pivot-guns.

“The Captain was a tall, thin man, about forty years of age, with a quick, intelligent eye. The sailor, who spoke English, and who had passed some time in England a prisoner, acted as interpreter.

“‘How many men on board your brig?’ asked the Captain.

“I saw no harm in not exactly telling an enemy the truth, so I said we were strong-handed—two hundred men, which was about sixty more than we had.

“‘*Diable !*’ said the Captain, ‘you *are* strong-handed. What boats has the brig?’”

“A launch,” said I, “that can carry fifty men at a pinch, two long boats, a cutter, and two gigs.”

“‘*Diable peste !*’ again muttered the Captain.

“‘She sails well,’ he continued, ‘but under jury masts—her sailing is done—we shall try and take her, however.’

“‘You had better, Captain,’ said I, very humbly, ‘let her alone—she is an ugly customer to play with.’

“‘Ah,’ said the Frenchman,” laughing, ‘we shall keep clear of her guns with this fine breeze, at the same time let her feel the weight of our metal. There, you may go,’ he added, ‘I don’t consider you as a prisoner of war, picked up as you were; you may stay on deck and see how we manage our pivot gun.’

“Well,” thought I, to myself, as I looked up at the monstrous latine sail and yard these French gun-boats carry, ‘if it would only fall stark calm, you’d have to manage something else, I’m blowed if you wouldn’t.’ I knew if it fell a stark calm, the ‘Spitfire’s’ boat would

Soon be on board, but, with the nice wind blowing, those boats sailed like witches.

"The Frenchman had sixty men on board, and was about eighty tons. The other, astern, was smaller, but seemed full of men. The brig was soon within range of their long gun. The boat astern keeping away to open the ball on the brig's other quarter.

"I was in a state of moral anxiety, for I could see that the crew of the 'Spitfire,' about one hundred and thirty in number, were working heart and soul to get up their jurytopmast, so as to get sail on the brig. I looked up at the sky, it was as bright as a polished mirror, but the sun was very hot; it might fall calm if the sea breeze did not set in, for the heat of the sun generally kills the night land-wind.

"I watched every movement—the pivot gun was pointed, and the concert commenced with a duet from the two gun-boats. They were still a little out of range, for I could see the balls strike the water, short of the brig; the distance was then lessened, and the next shot from the other gun-boat I could see told dismally upon the brig, knocking away the head of the fore-topmast and a lot of gear they were hoisting. I caught myself swearing and clenching my fist when I heard a cheer from the crew. Bang went the gun again, hulling the poor 'Spitfire,' who could actually do nothing. Just as they were loading again the huge latine sail fell as flat as a board, then bellying out, with a strong puff, it was its last breath, I could see the breeze gradually darkening the water, and receding from us towards the land, while to seaward it was a stark-calm.

"*'Sacre diable !'* was shouted by fifty voices.

"'The wind is done. Now for a change,' I muttered joyfully, to myself, 'in the performance, my jolly boys.'

"All now became bustle and confusion on board the gun-boats. The Captain sung out to rig the sweeps and get back into the wind, which was still to be seen darkening the water towards the land. Out went eight immense sweeps, and I was told I must help; well, I did so, for I could gain nothing by refusing, and the little I did would not save them.

"Like magic, four boats of the 'Spitfire' were in the

water, full of men. The French Captain danced and stamped about the deck like a madman, cursing something bitterly, old Boreas, I guess, but old Blowhard was not to be frightened! the more the Frenchman swore, the more calm grew Boreas. The gun-boat moved about three miles, an hour, under the sweeps, but the cutter and the two gigs came dashing through the water at the rate of eight knots.

"The Captain now ordered the gunners to load the pivot gun to the muzzle with grape and canister, and my comrade at the oar, the man who could speak English, said his Captain was the devil, when roused, and that he would sink the first boat that came up.

" 'Oh, of course,' said I, 'but those in the other boats will cut his throat if he does.'

" 'Well,' said my friend, 'stick close to me, I like the English, and some of my comrades, if they think they will be taken, might stick their cutlass into your ribs.'

"I thought that not at all improbable.

"Seeing it quite useless to row, all hands got ready for a desperate resistance; the sweeps were got in, the gun depressed, and the gun-boat brought into such a position that in boarding the 'Spitfire's' boats might receive the fire of the pivot-gun in the most deadly manner.

"I recognised our lieutenant, an Irishman of the name of Terence Murphy, in the leading boat, standing up and cheering on his men; the boats now separated, the one with Lieutenant Murphy making right at the side of the gun-boat, the other making a slight sweep to take her on her other quarter. I saw a man standing with a hatchet in his hand, close by the hoisting tackle of the latine yard; I guessed he was to cut it away, should the enemy get on board. I could scarcely breathe, for the gunner, with his match in hand, was waiting the order to fire.

"Just as the word to fire was leaving the Captain's mouth, I caught up a bucket of water standing near, and dashed it over the touch-hole of the gun; as I did so, a sailor, with a furious oath, levelled his pistol at my head, and several ran at me with their cutlasses, but, with a bound, I reached the side, and with a pistol-ball lodged in my left shoulder, sprang overboard. As I did so a loud cheer rang through the air, Lieutenant Murphy and his jolly crew were on board. I should have had a knock on the

head from one of my old comrades as I swam and laid hold of the gig's gunnel, had I not sung out. I was pulled in with a joyful shout, by my comrades, and in five minutes was on board again, but all I wanted was to see my good-natured friend, the interpreter, for I could not have the heart to strike at the man who saved my life.

"In less than five minutes the gun-boat was ours without the loss of a man, and only a few slight wounds I saved the Frenchman, luckily, for he was on the point of being cut down when I reached him.

"Lieutenant Murphy, after all was over, and learned how I had saved, most probably, all their lives, by swamp-ing the gun with a bucket of water, shook me by the hand, and swore he would get me rewarded, and so he did. The lieutenant took the other gun-boat, but lost three men, and six badly hurt."

CHAPTER IX.

"HARK!" suddenly exclaimed Henry Bond.

The skipper paused—a voice from above sang out—

"There's a precious squall a-coming, sir; it's roaring aloft like thunder."

"Ah, I thought as how we'd catch it," said Mr. Seabright, jumping up, but first tossing down the remnant of the second glass. Seizing his tarpauling hat, he rushed upon deck, followed by our hero. They had hardly time to reach it, when the gale struck the cutter, and she lay over to such a degree, having no way on her, that the skipper was on the point of crying out, let go the sheets and tacks, when the half-buried craft rose from the trough of the sea amid a shower of spray, and the next moment her active crew gained control over her. The gale blew a perfect hurricane from the east, with a dense fog. The trysail was lowered, and double reefed, the foresail secured, and a storm-gib set. It was now intensely dark and the storm howled through the rigging of the little yacht, with a wintry fierceness. The sea, already heavy, soon rose into crested waves, flooding the decks of the "Waterwitch," as she plunged amid the foaming waters.

"It's as well to heave her to, William," said Henry to

the skipper, who stood holding on by the weather shrouds, "what do you think, eh?"

"Why, we must do so, Master Harry; I'm watching our mast, it bends now, under this lot of canvas, like a whip. Ah! there goes the jib."

As he spoke there was a sharp report, and the jib disappeared in the gloom. Harry and two of the men ran forward; the foresail was double reefed. So making fast the sheets, it was soon run up, and the cutter hove to; the storm every moment increasing in fury. There were eight able seamen in the "Waterwitch," besides the skipper and our hero; they were, therefore, strong handed, and the men active and young. The yacht was a remarkably fine sea boat, strongly built, and of great beam. For eight hours the gale blew a perfect tempest, and it required all the skill, energy, and courage of those on board to keep her above water, that terrible night, long remembered on the coast of Cornwall; for no less than thirteen vessels were totally wrecked between Plymouth and the Land's End, most of those on board them perishing. The yacht's bulwarks were shattered to pieces—her bowsprit carried away—her main boom torn from its fastenings, and her gig and small boat stove in pieces. To run was out of the question, as the tremendous sea would have overwhelmed them. Providentially the trysail was of rather stout canvas, and proved their salvation; for had it split, or blown away, they must have perished. They, however, lost two foresails and two storm-jibs. The courage, energy, and daring of Henry Bond during the height of the gale, excited the admiration of the skipper and crew, even during that terrible and anxious time.

"Towards daylight, however, there appeared a lull, and just as the dull gray light of early morning stole over the storm-tossed deep, the loud boom of cannon was heard, and almost immediately another gun followed.

"Some large craft in distress," said Henry, giving himself a shake, to get rid of some of the superfluous water with which he was soaked, "and not very far from us either."

"There goes another gun," said the skipper; "that's out of a big ship, either a man-of-war or some homeward-bound Indiaman."

The wind was still violent, but more from the southward and eastward, and the weather so thick that they could not see more than a couple of hundred yards from the yacht.

As the day wore on, the storm decreased a little, and the crew were enabled to run out a temporary bowsprit, and reef ropes around the broken bulwarks. At mid-day it began to clear—the “Waterwitch” could now lie her course, though the sea was almost too powerful for her to contend against.

Just as they had run some few miles, and shook a reef out of the trysail, Henry, who was looking astern, perceived a huge dark object loom through the haze and mist of the breaking seas.

“Mr. Seabright, look aft,” exclaimed Henry; “I can make out a huge ship under her foresail, her main and mizen masts gone.”

All on board now saw her plain enough; she lay over very much on one side, with her bows buried in the water; she had her foresail flying, but the sheets and tacks gone.

“Let us bear away for her,” said Henry; “she looks to me, through the glass, to be sinking, and there’s a crowd of men astern, and some females also.”

“That’s a large Indiaman, Master Henry,” said the skipper, after a survey through the glass, at the disabled ship.

It required some little skill to get the yacht before the wind, the sea was so high, and breaking with such tremendous violence; but they at length succeeded, and ran down towards the East Indiaman. As they approached, rising on the crest of a huge billow, the little yacht looked like a cork as she dashed forward amid a cloud of spray, and passed close to the disabled ship. A loud cheer from those crowded in the stern of the ship greeted and encouraged their daring intention of assisting them, and a loud voice, through a speaking-trumpet, hailed them as they shot past, saying—

“We are sinking fast—our bows are stove in.”

All was consternation on board the “Waterwitch” on hearing these words, and Henry Bond became greatly excited on beholding several females amongst the group on the stern all secured, for the sea made a clear breach right over

the ill-fated ship, which lay in the trough of the sea, totally at its mercy, her huge foresail being unconstrained, flapping like thunder in the gale.

"Henry and the skipper consulted on the best means to be employed to get the people out of the sinking vessel. Neither had boats, and even if they had, they could not have lived in such a sea. Henry proposed passing close under the stern, and getting a rope on board, made fast to a cable, and then lowering their sails, get the females on board in a cradle, and slide them along the cable by keeping up their foresail, the yacht would keep distance from the sinking ship.

"There does not appear to be a third or even a fourth of her hands aboard," remarked the skipper, "she must have lost most of her crew when she lost her masts. We must be very cautious, master Harry; I will take the helm if you take charge of the rope."

The "Waterwitch" was gradually nearing the ship on a wind, the best mode of approaching her. When close under her stern, they perceived two men with coils of rope in their hands ready to heave. The ropes were caught, and the trysail of the yacht lowered, while her foresail backed her astern; the crew of the sinking ship understood at once the intentions of those on board the yacht, and a cable being made fast to the ropes, it was quickly hauled up over the stern of the East Indiaman, and the sailors busied themselves in rigging a cradle of ropes, but the ship rolled so fearfully and heavily that Henry feared every moment she would go down. One of his men stood ready with an axe to cut away the cable, should such an event take place.

In a few minutes one of the females was launched over the stern, and lowered down to the yacht, and the rope made fast to the cradle, to haul it back again.

Henry Bond was unceasing in his efforts to save the woman from immersion, but it was impossible to avoid dragging them through the sea. Several of the crew of the ship came down the rope and assisted in the labour.

The cradle was returning with the last of the females, a girl of some eight or ten years old: by some error in the fastenings, or a tremendous roll of the ship, straining it too suddenly, the unfortunate child was pitched screaming into the boiling sea.

Before the startled crew could even cast a rope, Henry,

who was working without his jacket or shoes, so as to retain his footing on the slippery deck, seized a coil of small rope, passed a loop over his body and plunged in after the child. A bold and splendid swimmer, he reached the girl.

Five of the yacht's men seized the rope to haul him back when necessary. Just at the point of being hurled from the summit of a wave into the abyss beneath, the child was grasped by the gallant youth, who raising himself in the water, shouted "haul in;" and were speedily brought on deck, where the child was frantically clasped in the arms of one of the ladies who had been rescued, together with the whole of the crew, and some valuable papers and their property.

The "Waterwitch" had scarcely got clear of the vessel ere it went down head foremost.

The whole of these proceedings did not occupy much more than an hour. Sail was now got upon the "Waterwitch," and her head turned towards her destination, the gale still continuing, but gradually veering more and more into the southward and westward. There were now two and fifty human beings on board the little craft of only fifty tons.

The captain of the East Indiaman, a fine hale old gentleman, shook Henry's hand warmly and gratefully, saying—

"How this little vessel lived through such a night as the last, amazes me; but for the goodness of God in keeping you up, during such a fearful storm, and so tremendous a sea, we must all have perished: I rejoice to say that all the women are saved."

"You must have lost a great part of your crew, captain during the storm," said Henry.

"Yes," returned Captain MacDowd, with a sigh, "thirty as fine fellows as ever manned a ship, perished the night before last. It was not last night's gale that was the cause of our terrible disaster. During the great storm of Tuesday, the wind sou'west, we must have been carried by a very strong current we were not aware of, some miles more to the nor'ard than we thought. The weather was very thick—a dense fog for four days previously—still I considered we were steering a fair course for the Channel, when, about two o'clock in the morning, the ship struck and broached to, and then lay over on her larboard quarter, with an awful sea going clear over her. In a minute the

whole crew were upon deck. I knew we must have struck on one of the reefs off the Scilly Islands. In less than twenty minutes we were nearly dismasted—our boats beat to atoms—and, as I said, thirty of my crew were washed overboard. It was an awful hour—a tremendous sea lifted us over the reef—and then she was got before the wind. Five of our passengers also perished—but none of the females—they remained below. We had still our foremast and foresail—and, for a few hours, we hoped she had escaped destruction—but we soon found she had stove in her bows, and that we could not hope to keep her afloat; however, we got a thrummed sail over the leak, and worked the pumps, and might perhaps have reached Falmouth but for the tempest of last night, which reduced the ship to a hopeless extremity.”

Everything was done that could possibly be done to relieve the passengers and crew received on board the “Waterwitch.” To supply the ladies with dry garments was out of the question, but life was saved, and that great boon made up for all other deficiencies—besides, as the wind blew they would make Falmouth or Plymouth before morning. Towards sun-set the heavy rain that fell brought the wind into the nor'-west, but the thick weather lasted till the following day. When it cleared off, a view of the coast was obtained, and they found they had made more way than they had calculated, for they had passed the Start Point; consequently, Henry continued his course and ran into Lyme Regis before night.

It is not necessary, for the future understanding of our story, that we take note of more than two of the passengers of the lost East Indiaman “The Surinam,”—the young girl, who was saved by Henry Bond, and her protectress. The former was the only daughter of a Mr. Fleetwood, an enormously rich English merchant, many years settled at Calcutta, whose wife had died when their daughter Fanny was eight years old, and, on her death-bed, had implored her distracted husband to send the child to England to be educated. In compliance with his wife’s dying wishes, Mr. Fleetwood engaged a Madame D’Arblay, a French lady, of good family, highly accomplished, and of a most amiable temper and disposition, to undertake the entire charge of his daughter.

Madame D'Arblay was the wife of a French *refugee*, who, some time previous to the death of Mrs. Fleetwood, had gone to France to take part in a projected revolution, and had left his wife in Calcutta, with the promise of sending for her as soon as he had been re-instated in his estates, which had been confiscated. No intelligence of him had ever reached his wife, and, consequently, she was glad to avail herself of Mr. Fleetwood's offer of going to England with his daughter.

Mr. Fleetwood determined, at length, to send Fanny and her protectress to England to reside with his brother, one of the wealthiest merchants in London, a bachelor, of a most generous and liberal disposition.

Accordingly, Madame D'Arblay, who despaired of ever hearing more of her husband, and fearing he had fallen a victim to his rashness and love of revolutionary principles, embarked, with her little charge, in the "*Surinam*," a noble ship of a thousand tons burden, for England, which they would never have reached but for the gallantry and courage of Henry Bond and the yacht's crew.

On reaching Lyme Regis, Madame D'Arblay was taken ill, and unable to continue her journey to London,

Mr. Parks, on hearing the name of Fleetwood, hurried down to the inn where Madame D'Arblay was located, and had an interview with her.

Miss Fleetwood's uncle, Mr. George Fleetwood, of London, was one of Mr. Parks' oldest friends and school-fellows; for years he had managed all his law affairs, and was still transacting business for him. He persuaded Madame D'Arblay and her charge to take up their abode with him at Bellevue, and at the same time promised to write to Mr. George Fleetwood, explain their situation, and propose to him that they should spend the winter with his niece there, instead of going to London.

The young girl was in raptures—she would be near her young preserver, for whom she already experienced the most intense interest and affection, and Henry himself felt the love of a brother for the beautiful child he had saved from a watery grave.

Mr. Fleetwood immediately wrote a very kind letter of thanks to Henry, and another to his old friend Parks. He was unfortunately, at that time, confined to his room by the

gout, but fully acquiesced in his friend's wishes. He also wrote to Madame D'Arblay, enclosing her a check for two hundred pounds, telling her to want for nothing, and that the moment his rascally enemy quitted his extremities, he would come to see her and his little niece.

A month afterwards, a magnificent piece of plate arrived at Grange House from the princely merchant for young Henry Bond, with two hundred pounds for the crew of the "Waterwitch," and one hundred pounds for the skipper.

During the six months Fanny Fleetwood remained at Mr. Parks's, Little Fan, as she was usually called, was daily and almost hourly at the Grange; her affection for Henry became the great leading object of her young life. She was a most amiable child, and, under the tuition of the accomplished and charming Madame D'Arblay, she bid fair to be very clever.

* * * * *

It was a sad day to Fan, and one of sincere regret to Henry, when Madame D'Arblay and her charge left the hospitable roof of Mr. Parks for her uncle's mansion in London, she thought her little heart would break—and nothing but the solemn promise of Madame D'Arblay, that she would prevail on her uncle to let her spend the next autumn at Grange House, as Mr. Bond kindly invited them to do, could console her on leaving.

A strange feeling was that in the heart of the young girl for her preserver. When near him, she watched his every look; if he painted, she was by his side, eagerly trying to interpret even his thoughts; if he rode out to hunt, she listened for every sound, to catch the well-known step of his horse's feet; or if he sailed in the yacht, her eyes never left the bay till he returned. Every one could see the devotion of this young child, scarcely thirteen years old, for the noble-looking and handsome boy, that played and romped with her like a child himself. It was an affection grafted into her heart that neither time nor absence would ever weaken.

* * * * *

The following autumn, Madame D'Arblay and her interesting charge passed three months at the Grange, and three months at Mr. Parks's. No intelligence could be obtained of Monsieur D'Arblay, though Madame wrote

several letters to persons she formerly knew in Paris; but the revolution was advancing with gigantic strides; the government of Louis the Sixteenth was overturned, his life threatened, and France, convulsed to her centre, awaited the issue in trembling anxiety.

* * * *

Mr. Parks, after various consultations with the most eminent lawyers, was forced to abandon all attempts to reinstate the heir of Tregannon in his birth-right. One of Henry's sisters, the eldest, had married, and gone into Germany—the youngest, Mary, said to be a most amiable and beautiful girl, corresponded with Mrs. Bond, and seemed most anxious and desirous of believing that her little brother, Claude, still lived; but Lady Treastle, though otherwise a most amiable and kind-hearted woman, would not listen to any reasoning on the subject, styling the affair a most artful imposition on the Bonds, being fully persuaded her brother perished in the manner stated.

Mr. Bond was furious.

“Ah!” said he, “the old story—if James Tregannon dies without heirs the property would go to their children. This prospect blinds them, and deadens all the natural good feelings in their hearts. Let it be; I shall still, thank God, be able to leave our dear boy a handsome independence. Confound my miserly cousin, I wish he would die before me, the estate would then be mine to will. I must set about making my will the moment Parks returns from London. Harry will stay two years at Oxford—after that we shall see how to act.”

CHAPTER XIII.

HENRY BOND was approaching his twentieth year, and within a few months of quitting Oxford for Grange House. Once only, during the last two years, had he seen Fanny Fleetwood, who having had the advantage of the best masters in London, excelled in most accomplishments. She was paying her last visit to Mr. Parks's, for Madame D'Arbly thought it more than probable that they would return to India the following year. Fanny was almost too

young to know exactly what love was, but she felt that the happiness of her life would be for ever clouded the day she sailed for India.

About this time the fever, that the two previous years had visited the coast, began to spread with fatal violence. It was thought very little of at first, but like all those terrible scourges that periodically visit the earth and sweep off thousands of the human race, it felt its way slowly but surely, gradually gaining strength with each new victory, till in its might and power it made mankind tremble.

In the summer of 179— it spread to a most alarming extent at Weymouth, Charmouth, and Lyme Regis.

One morning, at an early hour, Henry was roused from his slumbers by his attendant entering his room—

“Oh, sir!” exclaimed the man, “I have shocking intelligence to impart,” at the same time handing a letter to our hero in his uncle’s handwriting; “that was brought, sir, by a special messenger. The man says poor Mr. Parks is dead!”

“Good God!” exclaimed Henry, springing from his bed, and in great grief tearing open his uncle’s letter. It was written in great agitation, and contained but few lines:

“MY DEAR BOY,

“Your poor aunt is attacked by the fever. God help us! Kind-hearted Parks is dead, after only five hours’ suffering. I wish to see you—and yet it is better you should stay away. I am quite distracted and miserable. May God spare my beloved Ellen to me!

“Your loving uncle,

“HENRY BOND.”

“William!” exclaimed Henry, “order a chaise and four horses instantly. I shall be ready before they are here, lose not a moment. My God, my poor aunt! Ah! I feel I shall never see her more alive, and my kind warm-hearted friend, Parks, dead!”

Pale and agitated, Henry could scarcely finish his

dressings, or write a hasty note to his tutor, to explain the reason of his sudden departure.

In less than an hour he was rolling over the road to Exeter, through Bath, as fast as four horses and postilions doubly paid could urge them; his thoughts during his long journey were terrible. Without pausing on the road, excepting merely to change horses, he reached the lodge-gate of Grange House. One glance at the sobbing Mrs. Horn, the gate-keeper's wife, smote upon his heart, and before she told the sad tale he had suspected the truth. His aunt, his kind, loving, noble-hearted aunt, she who had saved him from a life of misery, perhaps, of shame, was dead, and his beloved uncle attacked! This was appalling intelligence. He felt a chill like that of death creeping over him, as he leaped from the chaise which he prevented proceeding up the avenue; he walked rapidly up to the mansion. The servants that received him were in tears; there were five besides his uncle in the house prostrated by the fever. In the hall he encountered Mr. Howard, the venerable vicar of the parish.

"Oh, my dear boy!" exclaimed the old man, grasping his hand, "this is a great trial for you to bear; God, in His mercy, give you strength and resignation to bend to His decrees. You had better not, however, incur unnecessary risk—you cannot be of service, as there are two eminent physicians from Exeter in the chamber with your uncle."

"Alas! my dear sir, by his bed-side is my place, were I to incur a hundred deaths; may God in His mercy restore Him!" and with the tears streaming from his eyes, he rushed up the stairs, and the next instant was kneeling by the bed-side, and bathing the hand of his kind benefactor with passionate tears of love and deep sorrow.

For three days and nights the strong constitution of Mr. Bond struggled with the destroyer, and during that time Henry scarcely left the room.

Though his uncle did not speak, except when raving, it was quite evident to Henry that he saw and recognised him; he felt his burning hand press his, and his eyes once or twice resting on his with such a look of fond affection, that Henry's heart beat with agony. Alas! he hoped against hope, for the physicians declared that there was no chance of life.

The last night of this painful struggle, it chanced that Henry, towards twelve o'clock, happened to be alone in the chamber with his uncle; one of the doctors felt ill, the other was seeking an hour's repose, the night nurse was below for some preparation she was making. For the four previous hours Mr. Bond lay upon his back apparently fast asleep, the eyes quite closed, the lips a little apart, breathing gently as an infant, and strange to say, there was a slight tinge of colour in the sunken cheek; his right hand and arm lay stretched out on the quilt. There was a profound stillness in the chamber, and the shaded light of the lamp fell dimly on the face of the sleeper, on which Henry was gazing earnestly, and, oh! how painfully.

Suddenly the hand that lay on the bed was raised, and Henry distinctly caught the low murmur of his uncle's voice—

"Henry, my boy, my beloved boy, hearken to my last words, I cannot see you, but I feel you are near me." These words were only audible by Henry's placing his ear near to the lips of the dying man, he hardly breathed as these low anxious sounds were uttered in his ear. "Your father, my poor boy, was murdered by that villain, James Tregannon. Yes," he murmured in the ear of the scarcely breathing youth, "he killed him. I see it all now in this my last hour. My will—I die without signing my will!"

The lips closed, but the hand was raised and pointed towards heaven—the next instant it fell heavily on the bed, and as Henry pressed a passionate kiss upon his benefactor's lips, his spirit fled, and the youth became insensible.

CHAPTER XIV.

OUR hero continued in an insensible state for several weeks; it was not, however, the prevailing epidemic that had attacked him.

The shock he had so suddenly received, his intense grief at the loss of his aunt, his uncle's strange words at the moment the hand of death was upon him—his having partaken of no sustenance from the period of leaving Ox-

ford, and for many hours after his arrival at Grange House, all together acting on his strong frame, prostrated both mind and body.

When he first unclosed his eyes with returning consciousness, he gazed bewildered on the objects around him. Gradually his memory returned, and, with a heavy sigh, he remembered that he was now alone in the world—aunt, uncle, and even the good-hearted and warm friend, Lawyer Parks, all were gone. Tears, those outpourings of the heart, came to his relief, and after a time he again looked around him. A profound stillness reigned in the chamber, broken only by the low murmuring voice of an elderly woman, who, seated near the window with a small table before her, was reading the Bible. A glance convinced him that he was no longer in Grange House, for every chamber in it was familiar to him.

He was evidently in a cottage chamber, the roof low, the two windows small and glazed with diamond-shaped panes inserted in lead. Everything around and about him was scrupulously clean and snowy white; the windows were open, and a cool, delicious breeze, gentle as a zephyr, lifted the light gauze blinds that softened the bright beams of a June sun. He looked at the old dame, and thought her features were familiar to him, but he could not quite recollect where he had seen them; he wondered much where he was, and again he shut his eyes, for the old nurse rose, closed her Bible, and left the room. A minute or two after he heard the door again open, and, again unclosing his eyes, he fixed them on the person who was entering, for there were no curtains to the bed. Henry felt his heart throb almost violently as his gaze rested on the figure of a young girl in deep mourning. As she closed the door she raised her eyes, and they met those of Henry. With a wild cry of rapturous joy she looked up to heaven, and then rushing to the side of the bed, fell upon her knees, exclaiming—

“Oh! Henry, Henry! blessed be God, He has restored you to my prayers!” and bending that beautiful head, she covered the hand tremblingly held out towards her with a torrent of tears.

“Fanny, beloved Fanny, is it indeed you?” murmured Henry, in a voice choking with emotion. “I am not, then, alone in the world.”

"Alone, Henry!" exclaimed the young girl, in a voice of touching affection, and almost reproach, "Oh, no, not while Fanny—your own Fanny, for her life is yours—not while life is spared to her."

Thus, in that moment of returning recollection did those two young hearts, loving from early years, become united and bound together by a tie that neither time, nor suffering, nor separation, had ever the power to sunder.

Madame D'Arblay hearing the sound of voices from the adjoining room, hastened to learn the cause, accompanied by Hannah. All were rejoiced to see the improvement in their charge, but Madame D'Arblay insisted on their withdrawing, for she feared the over-exertion and excitement might bring on a relapse. Fanny Fleetwood, with joy in her young heart, and a look of fond affection at Henry, and promising to return for a few minutes in the evening, retired, leaving him to repose, for so extremely weak had the long continuance of the fever left him, that even the few words he had spoken nearly overpowered him. A draught from the hand of Hannah, and a refreshing sleep, restored him greatly before night.

The following evening, Hannah sat by his bed-side, previously to the visit from Fanny, who, with Madame D'Arblay, resided in a cottage close by. He begged the faithful young woman to explain all the past to him, promising to remain silent and listen, and above all, to tell him how long he had been ill.

"Nine weeks," said Hannah, "nine long weeks; five of them that dear angel of a girl spent in this chamber, watching every change in your wasted features, always hoping, always saying, God would spare you, and He has—for you have had a terrible struggle with death. I was nearly worn out when that dear girl and kind madame arrived from London. Oh, the agony that beautiful girl suffered when she first saw you."

"But how came I here?" asked Henry, the tears streaming from his eyes as he thought of the devotion of Fanny, braving the terrible malady that had carried off so many, to nurse and watch over him.

Hannah sighed, for she could not but weep over the recollection of the once happy home they had all enjoyed under the roof of Grange House.

"You ask me where you are, Mister Henry. Alas! we are no longer under our old roof, but you are not far from it; you are in the cottage on Charmouth Cliff, belonging to good Mrs. Sims, mother, you know, to Mrs. Horn, the gate-keeper's wife, of Grange House."

"Ah, yes, I remember her well," said Henry, "now I suppose Mr. Robert Curtis Bond is the possessor of Grange House."

"The wretch! The miserable, miserly wretch," exclaimed Hannah, in a tone of excitement. "Yes; three days after our poor master and mistress's death, this vile, heartless man arrived. Imagine to yourself a man thin as a lath, full six feet high, with a face like a hatchet, his garments threadbare, and so tight on his miserable legs, that he looked like a scarecrow upon stilts, and yet he had a dark, savagescowl upon his features, with his great bushy overgrown eyebrows. Oh, how I wished—God forgive me!—that he might catch the fever; but, Lor' bless me, even the fever would not prey upon such a starved carcase as his. When the first dinner he eat in the house was served up to him, he groaned and ground his teeth like a maniac, crying out, "Oh, Lord, oh Lord, look at this shameful waste and extravagance." The next thing he did, even before the remains of your aunt and uncle were carried to their last resting-place, was to order your removal from beneath his roof. There, don't flush in the cheek and put your poor wasted frame into a nervous fit," pleaded Hannah, soothingly, "you would not think the words or conduct of such a brute worth attending to. I would have strangled him myself, the miser, only he was too contemptible to care about. Doctor Grant—the other poor doctor, and a good soul he was, died of the fever, in four days, and poor William was near going, but got over it at last.—Well, Doctor Grant said it would be your death to move you. The wretch replied what was that to him, out of his house you should go; Poor Miss Parks was dangerously ill, or I would have moved you there. None of the servants in the house would obey him, and they were all discharged after the funeral. He was going to send to Lyme for common porters to move you, when I determined to do it myself, and I came to Dame Sims, and the good soul gave up her cottage directly. Six of the servants carried you here on a litter; you did not seem to suffer much by the removal.

The whole country cried shame on the wretch, and while he stayed he was afraid to stir out, for the sailors of the yacht vowed if they could catch hold of him, they would half drown him. After the funeral, Mr. Saunders, poor Mr. Parks's law friend, arrived. Your poor uncle's will was all regularly drawn up, and all ready to be signed the very day poor dear Mr. Parks was seized by the fever. In it you were acknowledged as his nephew, by marriage, that you were the lawful heir of Tregannon, and, except the Grange Estate, he left you everything but what went in legacies to his servants. Mr. Saunders remonstrated with this Curtis Bond, and said, in honour, he was bound to follow up the wishes of his deceased relatives, with respect to the legacies bequeathed to faithful old servants. The miserly wretch got into a towering passion, and swore not one shilling would he pay anybody, save what the law compelled him.

Mr. Saunders was disgusted, and sternly told him that what was your private property, such as were well known to be gifts of Mr. Bond to you, he would claim, and would insist on their being restored to you.

"I will not tell you what the wretch said, for it would only fret you. Mr. Saunders gained his point—all your private effects were, therefore, removed, and the splendid plate sent you both by Mr. Fleetwood and the firm of Johnson, Drake, and Co., the owners of the East Indiaman, the 'Surinam,' and your two horses, books, etc., etc., were removed to Miss Parks' mansion, who still continued dangerously ill.

"Your aunt's property went to the next of kin on her own side; your sisters, therefore, will get that, though you, of course, poor dear soul, are her next heir, if your identity could be proved. She never anticipated the fearful blow that came upon her so awfully; she was still, you may say, in the vigour of life, not fifty, and they were both planning how to invest the whole for your benefit, when the awful fever took them.

"Some three years back, your lamented aunt purchased an annuity of sixty pounds a year for me; alas! that such a kind heart should be called out of this world, and the bad ones left; but it's God's will. Mr. Henry, and He knows best what is good for us.

"After the funeral, the servants, as I said, were all dismissed, the house shut up, and left under the care of a miserable couple, husband and wife. The yacht was purchased by somebody in London; I did not hear the name. The old skipper and the crew were to take her there this week, I understand."

"Now tell me of Miss Fleetwood," said Henry, with a heavy sigh, "how did she hear of my illness?"

"Oh!" said Hannah, with a smile that betrayed something more than the mere words she said, "oh, I wrote to the dear girl to tell her, for poor Miss Parks could not, and she and madame came here at once, and took lodgings in a cottage near us. Ah, Mister Henry, I was very careful of you, but Miss Fanny was your guardian angel; and though you did not know her or anybody, you were like a child when she spoke to you, and what you would not take from any other person you took from her eagerly. It was like as if God was pleased to see the pure true love and devotion in the heart of the beautiful girl, who neither cared for sleep nor rest, so that she could ease the pain you suffered, and thus caused you to feel that an angel was tending your sick bed. Ah! Mr. Henry, the Almighty never formed a more beautiful creature than Miss Fanny, and her soul is purity itself."

Henry sighed heavily.

"Why do you sigh, my poor boy,?" said Hannah, thinking of old times. "Is she not bound heart and soul to you? You are her life, and never, never, believe me, will she ever know happiness away from you. And you love her well, Mr. Henry, that I know, and she knows it too; for hours you have raved about her. She heard, too, your strange ravings, all about your father, whom you said was murdered by James Tregannon, and that that villain had robbed you of your rights. Miss Fanny was astounded, for you are aware she did not know your early history; so I told her all, and that all was true what you said, except, indeed, that your poor father was murdered by James Tregannon, that was the raving of fever; I told her how your father took poison by mistake in a fit of grief on losing you; thus, you see, the dear young lady knows everything. Until she got my letter she had no intelligence of your illness, and when she did hear of it, nothing would do but to

come down here, and attend on you ; indeed, madame herself was most anxious, and Mr. Fleetwood offered no objection ; so you see, Mr. Henry, you have many kind hearts to think of you and to love you."

"Your's is a kind, good heart, Hannah," said our hero, with much emotion ; "I should be a very ungrateful being if I felt not the deepest gratitude for the devotion and tenderness you have displayed."

"Never mind that, Master Henry, get well, that's the first thing ; after that, we will soon set things to rights. Now, try and get a little sleep—for Miss Fanny and madame will be here in a couple of hours ; in the meantime you shall have a nice cup of tea—all you want now is to get strength."

So saying, the affectionate and devoted Hannah rose up, settled some things in the room, and retired, insisting on her charge trying to sleep. He certainly closed his eyes to please her, but the vision of Fanny Fleetwood drove away all repose

CHAPTER XIV.

It was now the month of July, and Madame D'Arblay and her charge had returned to London. Our hero was sufficiently recovered to take exercise in the open air, and was rapidly regaining his former strength and vigour ; but his spirits had received a shock which nothing but time could restore. We leave the parting of these two young people to the imagination of our readers, but we recal a conversation a few days prior to their leave-taking.

Could the future look dark and gloomy at their age, when all appeared sunshine ? No dark clouds were allowed to throw a shadow over the path before them. Henry sat, when able to leave his room, on the rustic seat before the cottage-door—Fanny by his side—the scene before and around them was bright and beautiful enough, had they thought of looking at it—but Henry looked only into the deep blue loving eyes of the sweet girl beside him, and Fanny saw nothing but her lover. They talked over the past, but they allowed their thoughts to rest only on the

present, leaving the future to Providence, and, in some respects, it was wise to do so, for many poison the present by anticipating evils in the future, that never occur except in the foreboding mind of the dreamer.

Fanny listened to Henry's account of the past—his early years—the cruel usage he had received, and the fond affection of his lost relatives, the Bonds, his utterly helpless position, without a name, without fortune or station.

"How, then," he cried, "can I expect to win this dear hand?"

And he pressed the one he held fondly to his lips.

"Quite easily, my own Harry," returned the girl, with her bright, sunny smile. "In the first place, the said hand you have already got possession of, and my poor heart with it. We are both too young to be forging difficulties for ourselves. You have promised faithfully to come to London in September, to see uncle George, who already loves you, though he has never seen you, for you were absent when he came to the Grange; and you have promised not to think of that scheme of yours of volunteering into the navy, because the Duke of Clarence and many of the nobles and gentry of England have done so, till you have seen him. Then you say you have no name. Take your own, dear Harry," added the fair girl, with a kindling of her deep blue eyes, that showed, young as she was, there was spirit and energy in that gentle heart, if circumstances required its display. "Take your own name of Claude Tregannon; and let any man dare say you have no right or title to it."

"My own glorious Fanny," said Henry, his pale cheek tinging with a colour long absent from it, "I will do so; for I ought to assert my right to my name; let the villain who seeks to deprive me of it, prove I have no claim to it."

"Well, then, we will leave all the rest till we meet in September. Hannah, when you are well enough to go on your search for the cave in Cornwall, will come up to London to live with me. Madame is particularly partial to her."

"And most truly she deserves it; she has been unceasing in her affection, and, but for her steady attachment, I might never have lived to be blessed with your presence."

Thus communed those young hearts, and thus they

parted—loving and hoping, and trusting, with pure faith, in the future.

After the departure of Madame D'Arblay and her charge, Claude Tregannon, as he henceforth determined to call himself, let who would dispute his title to the name, set about ascertaining in what kind of position he really stood.

Miss Parks had returned to her father in London, who was busy arranging his brother's affairs, for, strange to say, he also died without a will; but as his brother was next heir, there was no difficulty in the arrangement. Some five years previously, he had made his niece Margaret a present of five thousand pounds, which he laid out advantageously for her. To Henry she was a sincere friend; and, previously to leaving Bellevue, assured him of her desire of assisting him by every means in her power. It was grateful to Henry's feeling heart to find he possessed such firm and true friends. Every day, for an hour, he was accustomed to wander to the picturesque and beautiful church, where rested his beloved aunt and uncle, whose love and attention he could never forget. The fever still continued to carry off its victims; amongst the last was the venerable Mr. Howard.

Claude being completely restored to health, prepared for his departure into Cornwall, feeling an ardent desire to behold Tregannon House, and have a search for the cave where James Tregannon was supposed to have been concealed, previous to and after his abduction from Tregannon. The words of his uncle—that his father had been murdered by James Tregannon—made a deep impression on his mind. At first he considered they were the result of disordered intellect brought on by fever, as he could not see how it was possible that such should be the case, after all the evidence and proof brought forward that the late Baronet unintentionally poisoned himself. Still those words coming from his uncle, when the last breath of life was escaping from his lips, so solemnly, so emphatically pronounced, looked as if the dying man was inspired with a divine light, and uttered the words in the firm belief that he revealed the truth. The more he pondered over them, the more he became convinced that such, after all, might be the fact. He began calmly to argue the case with himself. James Tregannon, no doubt, was well acquainted with every inch of the

mansion ; was it not possible he might have entered by some secret way, and, getting, in the dead hour of the night, into his father's room, have forced the poison down his throat. The fearful shriek heard by several, and by his own man, was a strange circumstance in itself ; he, therefore, resolved to minutely examine Tregannon House and grounds, if he could gain permission to do so, and also to search for the cave. On looking over his effects and means, he found he was just master of about seven hundred and fifty pounds, after selling his horses and some sporting articles he had no longer use for. The splendid plate presented to him by Mr. Fleetwood and the owners of the " Surinam," he had packed up and forwarded to London, to the care of the kind-hearted Mr. Saunders. It was a great consolation to his generous heart to know that notwithstanding his altered position in the world, the friends of Mr. Bond all evinced the greatest kindness towards him. Several sent most friendly letters—for while the fever raged along the coast most of the country families had deserted the vicinity—offering services, and inviting him, on his convalescence, to come and spend some time with them.

He also received a letter from a very dear friend and companion of his at Oxford, the Honourable Frederick Delaware, whom he had saved from drowning, and who was well acquainted with all his previous history.

Frederick Delaware was destined for the Church, his father having some interest in that quarter ; his elder brother was in the Guards. Frederick, however, was not at all inclined for Church preferment, and wrote to Claude, and after stating his deep regret on hearing of his bereavement and altered position in the world, invited him to join him in volunteering into the navy, that the Duke of Clarence and many of the young nobility and gentry had, on the declaration of war against France, volunteered to serve, and that he had obtained leave from his father to do so, and trusted that Claude, with his love for the sea, and his perfect knowledge of navigation, would join him.*

* At this period many young men of distinguished families, following the example of the Duke of Clarence, began to flock into the navy. One ship was remarkable for the number on board. The youngsters were accustomed to reef and furl the mizen topsail. They were aloft one day furling the sail, when the

This proposal Claude would most willingly have agreed to but for his promise to Fanny.

* * * * *

Having, with great difficulty, prevailed upon good Mrs. Sims to accept remuneration for the use of her cottage, and her kind attention to him during his long illness, he set out for Cornwall, having first seen Hannah leave for London. He reached Truro on the third day, and having only a very small portmanteau, and wishing to avoid all public places, he set out on foot from Truro, to a little hamlet, now called King Harry, and situated on a bend of the River Fal, called King Harry's Reach. This village was within a mile or so of Tregannon Park. There he found a neat country inn, with a ferry to the opposite side of the river, there being no bridge over the Fal till it reaches the town of Truro. The landlady was a widow, advanced in years, and a highly respectable old dame she seemed. Besides keeping the little inn, her two sons farmed a considerable extent of land belonging to the estate of Tregannon.

It was evening when Claude arrived with his little portmanteau in his hand, his face flushed with exercise, his strength and health quite restored, and though attired in an extremely plain suit of mourning, his noble figure, and the same singular beauty of feature his father was so remarkable for, attracted, immediately, any one he addressed. The dame was seated under the rustic porch of the inn, covered with the blossoms of various parasite plants; she was busy knitting, with her spectacles on her nose, at the same time reading a large old family Bible, and, at times, watching the ferry boat that was coming over from the opposite side, with some cattle. The river ran calm and tranquil before the cottage door, and a deep-laden sloop was working slowly up with the tide; it was a calm, peaceful scene to look upon in a fine, clear, warm evening in July, with the last rays of the setting sun catching here and there an open glen to play upon the water, while the deep shadows of the noble trees on the high banks stretched right across the stream.

Captain of the ship sung out, "My lords and gentlemen, and you right honourable lubbers on the mizen topsail yard, furl that sail, and come down out of that."—*Life of Earl St. Vincent.*

Our hero approached the porch, and the old dame taking off her spectacles, looked into his face as he addressed her in his musical voice, saying—

“Pray, my good dame, can you give me accommodation for a week or so? I am an amateur artist, and I have heard a great deal of the beauty of this district.”

As the old dame listened to his voice, and gazed anxiously and earnestly into his face, the tears came into her eyes, some strange flash of memory darting through her brain; wiping them away with the corner of her apron, she got up, and dropping a curtsey, said—

“Surely, sir, surely we can accommodate you. Lord, bless me!” she added, with a sigh, looking earnestly into his face, “what strange fancies do come into old people’s heads! please to excuse me, sir, but indeed, indeed, you do so put me in mind of times past, that I cannot but believe I am dreaming. Jessie, girl, come here.” She called out through the open window.

“Why, my good dame,” said Claude, with an eager and natural curiosity, as she was putting aside her knitting and Bible, “why do I put you in mind of past times?”

“Lord, bless me, that voice of yours, sir, makes my heart thrill. I’m a queer old body, sir, and live much in the past, as most old people do. Beg your pardon, sir,” turning to a very pretty rosy girl, who just then came out from the house. “Get the little bed-room and front-room ready, Jessie, for this young gentleman; he is going to stay with us for a week, he says; and take his portmanteau up stairs.”

Jessie ventured a look at the tall and handsome youth before her, and then took his portmanteau.

“Will you please to sit down in this porch, sir? ’tis a very pleasant evening, and the heat of the day is now passed; your room will be ready very soon—would you like to have tea, or perhaps you have not dined.”

“I shall be quite content with a cup of tea,” said our hero, sitting down and gazing upon the river.

He did not like to question the dame further at that moment, but he felt satisfied that she must have known his father and all his family, having been many years resident on the estate; for he understood that the Tregannon property extended a considerable distance up and down the river. He sat for half an hour under the porch, musing

deeply, and attracted at times by the boats and smacks coming up with the tide.

"Now, sir," said Dame Treestrail, "your rooms are ready, and your tea also."

The sun had set, and a deep shadow spread over the scene, as Claude rose and followed his landlady up stairs into a small, but very neat sitting-room, the windows of which faced the river. Candles were lighted, and the tea and toast placed upon the table. Everything looked comfortable, and the old dame seemed pleased when he expressed himself to that effect.

"Ah! sir, I do not know how it is," she said, "but I think I'm a-dreaming when I shut my eyes and hear your voice, it's so like—dear me, it's so very like—"

"Pray take a chair, dame," said Claude, "for you have made me very curious; besides, I wish to ask you a few questions about Tregannon House."

"Lord, bless me, sir," said the landlady, "did you say Tregannon?"

"Yes, Tregannon," returned our hero; "living so near to it, no doubt you know all about the place."

"Lord, love ye, my good sir, I lived two-and-twenty years in Tregannon House. I know all about it," she added, with a heavy sigh. "Yes, in truth I do, and a noble family they were. I am proud to say, sir," continued the old dame, "that I was the nurse to the late Baronet, Sir Henry Claude Tregannon; and when I married my poor man, who has now been dead nigh seventeen years, my kind, generous master bestowed this house and fifteen acres of land on me and mine for ever, and also let us the little farm adjoining at a very low rent. But since Sir Henry's unfortunate death, the agent of the present master made us pay three times the rent, or give up the farm; but the Lord's name be praised, my sons were well to do, and sooner than give up the farm, after holding it so many years, we gave Mr. Stonehenge the sum he required. All the tenants' rents are raised, and many of them say that they will give up their farms when their leases are out."

"You said my voice reminded you of some one."

"Lord, bless me, yes; it's as like as any two human voices can be—to say nothing of your wonderful resemblance—to—to the late Baronet's—oh dear, oh dear, if that

dear, poor boy had lived that was drowned in this here river, he couldn't have grown up more like his father than you are, sir. I hope you will pardon my saying so. Ah! it was a woeful day, that day—it's now—let me see—for I ought to remember it well—for my poor man was on his death-bed that very day; yes—seventeen years ago and a few months. If he were alive now, he would just be your age, to judge by your looks, sir."

"Who lives in Tregannon House now?" demanded Claude, after a short pause. "Any of the family?"

"Lord, bless ye, no, sir. The family be all gone out of this country. Three fine girls they were, of different mothers, but all handsome girls. Miss Mary, the prettiest, is the only one unmarried. Then came the present Baronet—" The old lady shook her head. "He did not stay long. I remember him well; for although I was married and settled here years before he came to Tregannon, yet scarcely a day passed but I saw some of the family, or went up to the house to see my master. Ah! he was a sad boy, but a worse man. Laws me! how I am talking to a stranger! and yet I can't think, sir, but you must be in some way or other connected with the Tregannon family. Is that the case, sir?"

"Did you ever hear of Mrs. Bond, of Grange House, in Dorsetshire?" asked Henry.

"Lord, be good to us! surely you do mean my poor master's sister, Mistress Ellen Tregannon as was before she married Mr. Bond. Ah! she was a kind, loving soul, and dearly loved her brother; and yet, poor erring mortals that we are, Sir Henry did not love his sister as fondly as she loved him. Perhaps she tried too much to break him of some queer fancies he had, and you know, sir, young as you are, it's very hard to break oneself of things one feels accustomed to—and then we don't always love those best who wish us well; but, pardon me, sir, I never heard that Mrs. Bond had any children."

And Dame Treestrial looked very earnestly into the face of Claude, whose cheek flushed under her inquisitive gaze.

"My name is Bond," he at length said; "you, perhaps, heard of my aunt and uncle's death, from the terrible fever that raged some months ago on the Dorset coast."

"Dead! Mrs. Bond, Ellen Tregannon that was, dead!"

exclaimed the old dame, in a tone of bitter grief; "and I live to hear it—I that am past my eightieth year!—alas! alas! what a world it is; I have outlived all those I loved and honoured. And so you are a nephew of Mr. Bond; well-a-day, why you should be so like to Sir Henry Tregannon is very wonderful!"

"You have not told me who lives in Tregannon House."

"Nobody resides in the house, sir—that is, none of the family, since the attorney, Mr. Stonehenge, went off to America; did you hear of that, sir?"

"Yes," returned Claude, "I heard he made away with fifty thousand pounds, raised upon the estate, and by James Tregannon insuring his life."

"Well, sir—I heard after that the lenders got possession of the estates, and then a London lawyer and two gentlemen came down here and formally took possession, and went round to all the tenants and settled the paying of the rents. My eldest son, who was a great favourite with my poor master, took the gardens and the lawn of twenty-two acres, and the two small farms adjoining this, and undertook to keep the house, etc., in repair, and he and his family live in it. His eldest daughter was married some little time back to a young surgeon, who is doing very well in London, and, indeed, we are all well and prospering; but we never forget the loss of our dear master's son; it continually haunts my son Nicholas's mind that the body that was buried was not our master's child; but, good Lord, who's else could it be, in the dress of the poor boy?"

Claude listened in a musing mood for several minutes, and then said—

"Your son, I hope, will permit me to see the house and grounds; my uncle told me there were some fine family pictures in the great gallery, and that the pleasure-gardens and grounds about the house were very beautiful."

"Oh, dear me, sir—you will be very welcome to go there every day, if you please; everything is just as it was—nothing touched. Ah, sir, you will see a full-length portrait of my dear master, and, Lord bless me, except that you be better and stronger made, you be his very image; and then you will see a beautiful picture of his second wife, the mother of his beautiful boy, that God took to himself. Woe's me, he was too lovely a child to live!"

Our hero felt a strong wish to reveal himself, but was restrained, for many reasons; therefore, after some further trifling observations, the hostess left him to himself.

She, however, sent for her son, formerly the head gardener of the late Baronet, a highly respectable man, well brought up, and possessing great taste in ornamenting and laying out grounds. He was at this time about forty-eight years of age, and had five children, three grown-up daughters, the two youngest living with him in Tregannon House.

Later in the evening, Claude was sitting reading, when a tap at the door interrupted him. On his saying "Come in," Dame Treestrail's son entered the room; no doubt the old landlady had been talking to him of the extraordinary likeness of her lodger to his late master; for he came in with a strange, anxious expression on his intelligent and expressive features; as Claude Tregannon rose, and looked him full in the face, the light falling strongly on his features, the man staggered back, his cheek actually becoming pale from agitation and astonishment,

"Good God," he exclaimed, "am I dreaming, sir? sir," he added, leaning forward his face now flushed to crimson, "excuse me—you are not who you say you are—I cannot be deceived—you may take me for a madman—but were I brought before any court in Great Britain, I would swear on the Holy Book that you are the lost son of my old master, Sir Henry Claude Tregannon. I always said the body found was not his—I could have taken my oath of it. Oh, sir!" he added, the tears flowing from his eyes from excess of agitation and the memory of the past. Claude stood irresolute and surprised, so irresistible was the manner and appeal of Mr. Treestrail—"Good God, sir, speak to me—let me hear your voice—do not be afraid to speak, or answer me—I would lay down my life this moment for the son of my beloved master."

Our hero was affected by the sincere and earnest manner of Mr. Treestrail; and holding out his hand, he said—

"You are deceived, Mr. Treestrail, perhaps, by a strange resemblance."

"No, no, no!" interrupted the man, again turning pale; and grasping Claude's hand with eagerness, he suddenly pushed up the loose sleeve of his coat, and, baring his arm

nearly to the elbow, he gazed upon the muscular arm of the youth, and his eye rested upon an almost obliterated mark or cicatrice below the elbow; with a passionate exclamation, he threw his arms round the young man's neck, embracing him with all the fondness and devotion of a parent. "Ah, my God, sir, why wish to hide or disguise yourself from John Treestrail, who loved your father better than himself? Where have you been, sir, these long years past? Why let a villain rob you of your birthright?"

Claude was completely overcome by the earnest and vehement affection exhibited by John Treestrail. The mark on his arm he had never paid any attention to—and yet John Treestrail had at once searched for this, and, having seen it, became satisfied, past any one's power to shake his belief, that he was Sir Henry Tregannon's son.

"I will not deny to you now, Mr. Treestrail," said our hero, making him sit down beside him, "that I consider myself to be the son of Sir Henry Tregannon."

"God bless you! you could not deceive me," said Mr. Treestrail, with a smile of delight, and pressing the young man's hand fervently.

"We will talk over this another time; I will explain everything to you to-morrow, when I intend visiting you at Tregannon; but answer me one question—why did you seem so anxious to examine that slight mark on my arm?"

"Because, my dear young master, because I myself, unintentionally, inflicted the wound that left that mark—and I will tell you how, though my mind is in a state of such excitement and bewilderment that I can scarcely collect and put together the thousand strange ideas and images flitting through my brain. When you were about two years old, your lamented father came with you in his arms into the great conservatory; I was anxious to shew Sir Henry a magnificent cactus, just come into blossom, and, for a moment, he put you down. while he ascended a few steps to look at the flower. Short as was the time, you contrived to thrust your little arm through a pane of glass—the glass inflicted a severe cut upon the arm just below the elbow. Though the wound healed, it left a distinct mark like a small cord round the arm. I considered myself the cause of the accident, and it made an impression on me. Some seven or eight months after, the mark was still

as plain as ever, and I felt satisfied it would always remain.

"When it was reported that you were missing, and supposed drowned, I said at once it was scarcely possible you could have fallen into the river, from the nature of the bank and the time of tide; and firmly believing in my own mind that you were stolen, and not drowned, I continued to search the country round all the rest of that day and night. I found a gang of gipsies encamped on a common near Truro; but certainly if they had anything to do with your strange disappearance I could not criminate them. I did not return to Tregannon till the following day—imagine my horror and grief when I heard of my master's death.

"Three or four weeks after, your supposed body was found; with others, I eagerly ran to examine it. Of the garments there was no manner of doubt—but I doubted the body. I said the limbs were not near so large, nor could I find a mark on the right arm, and I thought the hair lighter; but the Miss Tregannons and Miss Pritchard, the governess, said there was no doubt whatever about the body—whose else could it be? As to the mark I spoke of, they said that was ridiculous, no one ever remarked the thing but myself—so the body was buried as the heir of Tregannon—but I never, for one moment, believed it was the body of the lost child—I still considered you stolen, and carried off somewhere, but why, I could not rightly make clear to myself. I thought of your cousin, the present false Baronet, but I could not see what he could gain by that proceeding, while your father lived, for he surely could not calculate on the Baronet's taking poison accidentally. Sir Henry's death certainly would make him next heir; and thus, in the end, I came to the conclusion that he must have had a hand in making away with the unfortunate child; but years passing away banished all but the memory of the past from my mind. When my mother spoke to me about your strange and wonderful likeness to the late Baronet, and that there was something strange in your manner and words, and your being a nephew of Mr. Bond, I all at once became impressed with the conviction that you would turn out to be Sir Henry's son. The sight of your features, the tone of your voice, so wonderfully similar, satisfied me

I was right, and eagerly bared your arm to see if, after the lapse of years, there should yet remain some trace of the deep cut you received when a child; and there, on the identical spot, like a white thread, remains the mark I speak of, and so the Almighty, in His mercy, has preserved you through all, that you may defeat the villain who has usurped your birthright."

Claude Tregannon was much moved by the deep devotion and affection Mr. Treestrail evinced for his father and himself; late as it was he could not refrain from giving his anxious listener a full account of his past life and position in the world, and the extreme difficulty, if not impossibility, of establishing his claims.

"And now, Mr. Treestrail," said our hero, "we will leave till to-morrow any further disclosures and comments on this strange and complicated state of affairs. I will then let you know the project I had in view in coming here; you can greatly assist me, and perhaps together we may do more than either singly. I wish—and you can see yourself the propriety of my doing so—to remain a stranger to every one, except your aged mother."

"Ah, my dear sir," said Mr. Treestrail, "you could not deceive her; old as she is, her memory of the past is clear, and her devotion and affection too strong and sincere to be weakened by anything you said. In her heart she knew you were Sir Henry's lost son, and you passing yourself off for Mr. Bond's nephew decided the belief; but, as you say, it is late; thank God, I have lived to see this day; we may be baffled for a time, my dear young master, but the Lord will yet assert your rights when you least think of it. God bless you, sir," he added, pressing his hand affectionately, "I have many strange thoughts in my brain now, but they are all confused; to-morrow I shall get them into order;" so saying, the honest and kind-hearted Mr. Treestrail retired, leaving Claude Tregannon to his complicated thoughts and reflections.

CHAPTER XV

SEVERAL days passed with Claude Tregannon in frequent

visits to Tregannon House, and in long conversations with Mr. Treestrail. He felt a melancholy pleasure in rambling alone through the silent chambers, where everything remained as in the days of his unfortunate and lamented father.

Mr. Stonehenge had no desire to alter the elegance and stateliness of all around him; the same furniture, and the same splendid collection of paintings decorated the walls, carefully preserved and covered by Mr. Treestrail, from the period he obtained the care of the mansion. In the picture gallery, containing the portraits of the late Baronet's ancestors and those of his own family, two pictures had been removed by the orders of James Tregannon, and placed in a closet, but with a feeling of intense reverence and affection, Mr. Treestrail at once replaced them—they were those of the late Baronet and his second wife, and upon those two portraits Claude Tregannon gazed daily with the tears half blinding him from emotion. On his mother's sweet, youthful and lovely face he looked with an eager and overpowering feeling. In giving him birth she had resigned her young life, and those dark and beautiful eyes seemed to rest upon his, as he looked intently upon them, with such a sweet and heavenly expression, that he felt strangely affected. He could not fail of being struck himself by the very remarkable resemblance he bore to his father—the same eyes, nose, and remarkable mouth and chin. The late Baronet's very handsome features almost always bore a saddened expression of countenance, which made the similarity still more striking.

After gazing at these pictures for a considerable time, he would proceed to his father's chamber; not a single article in that room had been removed, James Tregannon having ordered it to be closed, and during his short residence at Tregannon it was never once opened. When Mr. Treestrail was left in possession, his first care was to restore the chamber of his beloved and lamented master to its proper state. Everything was carefully dusted and cleaned, and when our hero first visited the room, he could have imagined it had been inhabited the night before, so scrupulously neat was every thing.

Every part of the mansion was examined by Claude Tregannon, with the hope of discovering some secret mode

of entrance, but none could be found : except through some of the lower windows, there appeared no possible mode of entering the house, and Mr. Treestrail assured him, that during the Baronet's life those were carefully bolted and barred every night. He said he had himself a kind of suspicion that the mansion was entered during that eventful night ; but on carefully examining the windows, not a pane of glass or shutter was touched or broken. One morning, as Claude was walking round the east wing of the mansion, his attention was attracted to the very window by which James Tregannon had entered. He was suddenly struck with the idea of how easy it would be to get up to that window by the great pear-tree that grew beneath it. He had just got over the paling and crossed the flower-beds, to look more particularly, when Mr. Treestrail came by.

"I have been thinking," he said, "how very easy it would be to get in through that window, by climbing this pear-tree."

"God bless me !" exclaimed Mr. Treestrail, "I never thought of that window. Easy enough if it were unfastened. It is a lumber-room, I know, but I do not think I ever entered it, neither do I know where the key is ; but we must presently have a look into it. Whoever made the attempt to enter the mansion, and I am more and more convinced that some one did, depend upon it they were provided with tools and keys for opening doors. This window being more than thirty feet from the ground, escaped my investigation ; but we can go in now, sir, and have a look over the room, and see if the window is secured inside ; for I dare say, during Mr. Stonehenge's residence here, that room was never examined."

They passed on into the house, and Mr. Treestrail went to search for bundles of keys, while Claude Tregannon rambled through the house towards the chamber in question.

In a few minutes Mr. Treestrail joined him, and after inserting more than a dozen old keys, they found one that turned the lock, and opening the door, entered the room.

Claude Tregannon was immersed in very painful thought, for the words of his dying uncle haunted his mind, though he, at the same time, thought it probable that he was in a manner wandering, and naturally, by long thinking

on the subject, had become impressed with the conviction that the late Sir Claude Tregannon was actually murdered by James Tregannon. Our hero was not aware of the many conversations his uncle had had with Mr. Parks, who was firmly of opinion that the Baronet had never either destroyed himself, or taken poison inadvertently. For several moments they remained just within the door, gazing upon the many strange and incongruous objects heaped, without order or regularity, in various parts of the chamber.

Some very old pictures, in massive and tarnished frames, hung or leaned against the wall; broken mirrors, in very old-fashioned frames; great lumbering antique presses; old clocks and bells; queer-looking timepieces; grim images of all kinds, black with the dust of years; boxes of papers; old deeds and rolls of moth-eaten tapestry; great carved high-backed chairs of the period of George the First, and various other articles of the same time.

Claude approached the window; it was unfastened; neither were there any shutters. On opening it and looking out, he perceived that the great pear-tree reached to within a foot or two of the window, and that three or four feet below was a strong branch that would support any one wishing to get in at the window.

"Any one might stand on that branch, certainly," said Mr. Treestrail, looking out; "but we can only surmise this; for it would be impossible to tell by the tree or the wall, as the cement and plaster knocked off might be easily done by the unconfined branches of the tree."

Closing the window, they carefully examined the chamber, but nothing to excite suspicion met their view.

"We can make no discovery here, my dear sir," said Claude Tregannon; "but, no doubt, if any one entered through this window, they came provided with skeleton eyes, such as burglars use."

"Ah," said Mr. Treestrail, "if it was James Tregannon, and I feel convinced if anyone did, it must have been he, he was well acquainted with those tools, if all that the Constable Trelawney said of him was true."

"He must have caused my dear father much misery," observed our hero.

They descended the stairs, and shortly after walked out into the avenue: "Every time, Mr. Treestrail," continued

Claude, "that I walk over these grounds, some vague, indistinct vision of the past floats before my mind's eye, it seems as if the memory of my early childhood was returning to me like a dream."

"I do not doubt it, my dear sir—I do not doubt it, you were not too young to be impressed with some remembrance; and peculiarly situated as you were afterwards, ever thinking and dreaming over the past, those remembrances now come back to you, recalled by the scenes themselves. When you cross the river to-morrow at King Harry, recollect you cannot keep altogether along the bank of the stream, but you can keep in view of the water; the creek or inlet you mentioned, near which this cave is to be found, is the very inlet where the child's body was discovered. Whose child could that be?"

"I have puzzled over the whole circumstances till I became bewildered, indeed, I do believe that Sir Charles Treacastle and his lady were both firmly persuaded the body was yours, for as every one said, what other body could it be with your garments on? However, there is no use puzzling over this perplexing matter now; when you get to this creek you will see a high, reddish-looking hill, very abrupt and steep, and here and there thickly covered with low shrubs and brushwood; now it strikes me, my dear sir, that somewhere at the foot of that hill you will find the cave you mentioned, I do not know any other part in that locality where a cave could be."

"I shall have no difficulty," replied Claude, "in finding the locality. I feel so curious and anxious that, as I have plenty of time, I will walk over there this evening and have a look at the place."

"You can do so, certainly," said Mr. Treestrail, "and then to-morrow we will go over the ground together. You seem to have a wish to explore first by yourself."

Claude returned to his little room at the Inn, for though Mr. Treestrail wished him to remain at Tregannon House he preferred, for many reasons, to stay where he had first located himself; besides, he felt great pleasure in talking over old times with Dame Treestrail, whose great delight was to converse with him. Opening his portmanteau, Claude placed a brace of pistols in his pocket, not indeed that he had the most remote idea he should require them,

but such a precaution was not quite unnecessary, situated as he felt he was; he also put a wax taper and materials for striking a light, should he discover the cave mentioned in the letter received by Mr. Parks, which letter, with other important papers of his uncle, Hannah had taken care to secure.

Taking a stout stick in his hand he crossed the river by the ferry, and then branching off from the road, continued his walk along the banks of the Fal, sometimes pushing his way through a thick entangled nutwood, getting glimpses of the river as he proceeded.

Having walked rather more than two miles, he perceived the creek he was in search of, and he looked around him, but had not the remotest recollection of any object before him, having been enveloped in the sack during this part of his abduction; as he proceeded along the creek, which was half-a-mile long, he perceived the rotten planks and frame of a small punt, the bottom and sides all gone, and the timbers and gunnel so decayed as to turn to powder on pressing: "This, no doubt," soliloquised Claude, "was the punt the wretch and his wife crossed the river in." He then perceived the abrupt red-coloured hill Mr. Treestrail had mentioned, and in ten minutes he had forced his way through the low bushes and underwood that covered the ground between the creek and the hill. Standing where he was, he examined carefully the steep side of the hill; it had no verdure whatever on its upper surface, red clay and rocks seemed to be its only composition. The base was thickly covered with entangled masses of the blackberry and sloe-tree and other plants of low growth. There were no visible signs of a cave either below or above, but carefully with his stick he pushed aside the brambles, and after half-an-hour's diligent search, and when almost on the point of thinking there could be no cave, he discovered a narrow entrance into what was either a cavern or a mine-shaft. With an exclamation of surprise and pleasure, he made his way through the brambles and shrubs, and found himself without any trouble at the entrance of a deep fissure in the side of the hill. Continuing his way in, till the profound darkness caused him to stop, he struck a light, and soon found himself in a tolerable large and lofty cave; the light he had was, however, too weak to show all the

extent of the cavern—but scarcely had he advanced eight or ten yards, before he stopped with an exclamation of extreme astonishment, for directly opposite him were evidences that the cave either contained an inhabitant at that moment, or one had but recently left. Close to where he stood was a rude fireplace of four large stones, in which were a heap of half-burned pieces of dried wood, still emitting a light smoke. Beside the fire was a large tin saucepan, covered with rust, whilst a wooden peg driven in the side of the rock held suspended a sheep's head, quite fresh, and not many yards off was a large heap of fresh-gathered fern.

For several moments, Claude Tregannon stood gazing on those tokens of habitation with a strange feeling pervading his mind. Who could be the inhabitant of this cheerless dwelling? was his first thought. Some wandering gipsies, perhaps, had discovered it, and selected it for a temporary abode.

Continuing his examination, and carefully holding his light to every object, he, at length, in one corner of the cave, perceived something white, looking like a bundle; moving these asunder, and carefully separating them, he could see, rotten and decayed as they were, the garments of a young child, seemingly those of a boy. The conviction flashed to his mind that these articles, no doubt, had belonged to the child that was buried with all the honours due to the heir of rank and wealth. While he stood thus musing, and conjecturing a thousand strange ideas and surmises, the sound of a man's voice, deep and harsh, reached his ears, coming from the mouth of the cave. Claude felt the blood rush to his cheek and temples—that voice came upon his ear with the memory of the long past rushing through his brain; his heart beat till he fancied he could hear it, as with a convulsive motion his hand grasped one of his pistols. Extinguishing his light, he placed himself within a deep fissure, and, as he did so, heard the same voice say—

“Wait awhile, Bill, I'll strike a light—you don't know the navigation of this place as well as I do.”

“Well,” replied a gruff, hoarse voice, “every man has his fancy. Curse these here dark holes; grubbing under the ground like a mole don't suit we gipsies; on the moor,

and the heath, or under the green-wood tree, suits our constitutions better."

"I like your notions, Bill," returned the other, striking a steel, and endeavouring to light a match. "Ah," he continued, with an oath, "what a fool I am! there are some embers alight yet in the fire there—I just caught a glimpse of them."

The next instant, a candle threw its glare round the cave, and our hero, from his place of concealment gazed upon the speakers with a trembling kind of intense anxiety.

The two men had advanced into the cave, and striking the candle into the handle of an old iron saucepan, the first speaker threw a lot of dry wood on the embers, and kneeling down, soon blew them into a flame, then rising, he said—

"Now sit down, Bill, on that stone, it's the softest in the place," he added, with harsh laugh; I can give you a first-rate glass of Hollands, and a slice of fried liver, and then we will have a chat. It's nigh eleven years since we met, and I've been half round the globe in that time, made a sailor of against my will, and fighting the enemies of my country as they called it. Curse them, they laid the marks of their d——d cat on my back—it was for being late in laying out on the foreyard—I had sprained my hand, and I could scarcely use it; but I swore then I would pay the scoundrel who ordered my punishment, and I did—he will carry my mark to his grave."

As the man spoke and turned round, taking out of a hole a stone jar, which contained the spirits, the light fell full on his strongly marked features. Eleven years had left their impress, and the face was changed; the well-formed features had a sterner, fiercer, and more desperately reckless expression, his hair was slightly grey, but his broad, massy form was still unchanged by time or hardship. Claude gazed upon his face with a stern brow and a clenched hand; he recognised those never-to-be forgotten features; there he was, the cruel tyrant of his early years, the man for whose apprehension his kind, noble-hearted uncle had offered such large rewards—there he was before him, the identical Black George, he so ardently thirsted to capture. So intense was his feeling of fierce resentment—so strong and so forcible was the memory of the past; his early suffering, and still more cruel wrongs, all rushed in

such painful confusion through his brain, that he was on the point of rushing from his place of concealment, and seizing his oppressor on the spot; a moment's reflection, however, calmed the tumult of his blood, and caused him to restrain his temper and wait till at least he heard what these men had to say, and to discover, if possible, what object brought Black George to the cave.

The men, in the mean time, had settled themselves near the fire, with two cans full of undiluted Hollands, and large slices of sheep's liver were cut, and placed across the charcoal to broil.

"Well, blow me, George, but this aint sobad neither," said the man named Bill, a tall swarthy gipsy, about fifty. It must be cursed damp here, in the winter though."

"Oh, I never came here till now, myself," said Black George, scientifically turning the broil, the smell from which pervaded the cave, "and I dont intend, now I have luckily stumbled on you, to stay longer than the time you will be getting me a gipsy turn-out. I must keep deuced close; it would not do to be hung out to dry, suspended from the fore yard of that d——d old ship I got away from."

"Well," remarked the other, "wherever you got this stuff, it's the right sort, George; now let us hear how the devil you came on board a man-of-war, and how you have disposed of your carcase these long years—here's your health, lad!"

"The last time I saw you, Bill," began Black George, stopping at intervals to devour the broiled liver and swallow a cup of Hollands.—"The last time I saw you was two days after, you may remember, that bungling affair of the Axminster stage."

"Oh, aye, I remember," returned the other, "but by —— I don't call it such a bungling affair; we shared three hundred and eighty odd pounds, and our four comrades who were nabbed got clear off for want of evidence."

"Yes," said Black George, "and lost the eight hundred pounds hard cash; but no matter, I had to make myself remarkably scarce after that affair, for those Bonds, of Grange House, took it into their heads to offer a deuce of a reward for my individual apprehension."

"Why, d—— it, George," interrupted Gipseey Bill, "why, it was those people who found your son, and kept

him, didn't they—What's become of him? I heard some queer reports in the village about that ere business. They took him for some one else, eh?"

Claude Tregannon hardly breathed.

"Yes," very coolly returned Black George, with a mocking kind of laugh, "that was a rum go, Bill; but as they paid for the boy's education, and made a gentleman of him, I let well alone. As to what became of him, I can't say, as I quitted the country soon after, as you shall hear, if you don't interrupt me."

"Very well—go it your own way, my lad; you were always a peg higher than any of us, when you got on your stilts."

"Well, some time after that," recommenced Black George, "I embarked with my wife in the Independence for New York, intending to try my luck in the backwoods, but ill-luck pursued me. Our captain was a drunken blackguard—the first mate a scoundrel, and the crew the most mutinous set of lubbers as ever handled an emigrant ship. We were a hundred and thirty-eight souls on board, men, women, and children, and all stowed between decks like a parcel of swine; with a steady east wind we ran a good distance in the first two days. It then chopped round to the south, blowing hard, and at night turned into a gale at south-west; before two o'clock the next morning our captain was dead drunk, our chief mate cursing, swearing, and bullying the crew, and driving the sick passengers down below, where the heat was stifling; the rascal struck me because I refused to go down and have the hatches fastened over us; in return I knocked him down—he then swore he would shoot me for a mutinous dog, and called the crew to help him. All this time the crazy old ship was plunging her bows into the breaking seas, and heeling over enough to carry away her masts, half the crew were drunk, and the other half mutinous: thus before daylight we lost our masts, and in the midst of a pitiless hurricane we drove ashore on what we learned afterwards was the 'Island of Arran,' in the Bay of Galway. In less than a quarter of an hour the sea swept a hundred of our wretched passengers overboard, and in less than an hour the ship went in two, and left the rest of us to drown or get ashore as we could; I lost my wife and every article I possessed,

and got to land with about thirty of our crew and male passengers, nearly as naked as when we were born—some with broken arms and bruises, penniless and miserable. The only consolation was that our rascally skipper was drowned, and that the first mate kept him company. The poor fishermen of the island, a rough but good-natured race, gave us shelter and food, and picked up what they could of the wreck; some boxes and chests were driven ashore, and the contents scattered with a lot of dead bodies over the rocks; we picked up garments enough to clothe ourselves. For three days I searched in vain for my wife's body, but it did not drift ashore. Well, to shorten my tale, we were carried to Galway and a subscription got up for us, and the sick and wounded taken to the hospital. I made my way along the coast, to get to Cork or some port, and work my passage to England, when one evening I was nabbed by a pressgang and carried on board a cutter, and finally on board a frigate in the Cove of Cork. We sailed shortly after with a convoy for the West Indies, there was no use in grumbling when the cat was exhibited for every petty offence; so as long as I got fair treatment I did my duty; but with the firm determination that as I was forced on board again against my will, I would leave, the first opportunity, of my own accord. After nine years' absence spent in foreign parts, now and then fighting and taking prizes, we sailed for England. I was not in the same ship all this time—for I got a severe wound in a fight with some piratical craft, and was left at Babadoes in hospital, and when recovered, shipped on board another King's ship. Well, we reached Portsmouth, and shared some prize money, and then I cut my stick, but not before I contrived to give the second lieutenant a knock over the head one night in Portsmouth that will keep up a lively remembrance of me in his brain; for some how, you see, Bill, I like to repay all debts of honour; he got me three dozen, for I may say nothing, and I told him I would repay him, and then he got me two dozen more, and six days in heavy irons, and a threat of hanging me next time. I left him, however with one optic the less, and a cut on the back of the head you could thrust your fist in."

"Sarve him right—curse him!" growled Bill. "What right have they to make a man a slave if he don't like it,

"Well, I won't dispute their rights, Bill—seamen must fight, you know, and if they would only be a little less tyrannical and pitch the blasted cat overboard, I don't see much cause for grumbling. Our first Captain was an out-and-out-fine fellow, and every inch a gentleman. The next rose from before the mast to be a skipper, and a black hearted beggar he was, and it was all flogging, though he had the finest crew in the fleet. Well, I now was free—so I made the best of my way, desiring to get rid of my sailor's garments, and once more rig myself as a travelling tinker. You know how I can change my face, Bill. I never let any one on board see me do this, and well it was I had this power, for ten times over I should have been nabbed but for it; for there was a hot pursuit after me, and had I been taken, I should have got, as I said, an airing at the end of a rope, on board one of his Majesty's ships—my first thought was to look after my son."

"Come now, George," interrupted Bill, with a laugh, getting more familiar as the Hollands worked, for he evidently stood in awe of his comrade—"Come now, drop this dodge, trying to gammon me; sure I knows blasted well that that ere boy, whoever he is, was not yours; our women picked up a lot of news from servants and others, while telling fortunes both here and in Dorset—and—"

"Well, what the devil is it to you," fiercely interrupted Black George, with a most ominous frown, and glenching his first, "whose son he is? It answers my purpose to call him my son."

"Well, curse it, George, you bain't going to quarrel with an old comrade as has helped you out of many a scrape when you first joined our tribe, and am now willing to do the same? But—"

"You are right, Bill—I'm a d——d ungrateful fellow to keep anything from you," returned Black George, holding out his hand; "but, you see, I'm sworn, and, as I was paid, and all's square, I never betrays a secret, till I'm betrayed myself—so let him be my son for the present."

"All right, comrade, all right!" exclaimed Bill; "I like good faith, when good faith is kept; call the chap your son, or your grand-mother, if you likes; but did you find him?"

"No," returned the other, "I did not. When I got

into Dorsetshire, I heard that the Bonds of Grange were dead—both dead—and that the property went to a miserly cousin of theirs, and that the old gentleman dying without signing his will, his nephew, as my son was called by them, was left with very little, and had departed from the country, and I could not find out where he went to, so I travelled on here; and, by mere chance, when sitting in an ale-house, I heard that I was tracked to these here parts, which made me get to this cave as fast as possible, as I had something to do here also, but my ill luck still clung to me; I wanted to see a fellow they called Stonehenge, agent to Sir James Tregannon, of Tregannon Park.”

“Why, hang it, George, that’s the chap, they say, as went by the name of Smith, a coiner and burglar, and that he fled the country because some chap, a constable, they say, recognised him as Smith—it’s a rum story altogether; you remember Smith well, don’t ye—the chap as took you away one time from us on Truro Common, eh?”

“Yes, I remember him well,” said Black George; “but did you hear what has become of Stonehenge, the attorney; you have been about these parts these two months and more—your women must have picked up some news.”

“Lord, aye, I knows all about him—he made off, they say, with a power of money to America, and robbed the Baronet of all his plate—but that’s contradicted—they say that’s in strong chests in Tregannon House still.”

“Ha, indeed,” interrupted Black George, sharply; “how many of you muster about the country here?”

“Oh, we are strong; and have done a good business here and there through the country—I could get ten or twelve stout lads in two hours—some five or six in half an hour.”

“Well, just get me a change of dress, and some of your walnut dye, for I am afraid to stir a mile from this. If I had not met you in the preserve I was hard up.”

“Well, then,” said Bill, “the best thing you can do is to come now with me to my tent, and I’ll change you so that your mother, if you ever had one, would not own you.”

CHAPTER XVI.

CLAUDE TREGANNON had listened to the conversation of the two men with feelings not easily described; when Black George had called him his son, the blood rushed violently into his face, but the after observations of both proved to him that Black George had still some important projects on foot. If he let him out of his sight now he might never get hold of him again, so subtle was the man's nature, and so extraordinary were the changes he could effect in his face and person. When they rose up to depart from the cave, and Black George was actually stooping to blow out the candle, our hero, trusting to his great strength and activity, and possessing fire-arms, rushed suddenly from his hiding-place, exclaiming in a loud voice—

“Villains, we have you now!”

At the first sound of his voice, the gipsy Bill started to his feet, and seeing the athletic figure of Claude, with a pistol extended in his right hand, turned and fled from the cave; not so Black George, he also started and turned round, but the next instant the grasp of Tregannon was on his collar, and their two faces were within a few inches of each other.

“So, ruffian,” exclaimed our hero, in great excitement, as he held the unshrinking robber in his powerful grasp, “so we meet now on more equal terms; you remember me, I see—time has not obliterated all traces of the child you so cruelly ill-treated.”

“No,” exclaimed the robber, “no, the father does not so easily forget the features of his son.”

“Fool, as well as villain,” said Claude, passionately, “cease to think this lying tale will find believers. You come with me, for sooner than let you escape me now, I would blow your brains out, and spare the hangman a task that ought to have been performed years ago.”

“Oh,” fiercely exclaimed Black George, “you crow lustily for a young cock; but remember, I tell you, I will swear before any magistrate in the land that you are my son—and I can give proofs of it, too, though I were to be hung for it the next moment; but you want to try strength, do you?”

With a sudden and very powerful jerk he thought to

rid himself of his young opponent; but Claude was, perhaps, as powerful a youth as any in all England; and not for an instant, strong as he was, had Black George a chance of victory over his detainer—still it was a fierce and terrible struggle. Our hero threw down his pistol, determined to master the ruffian by main force. Black George with a savage curse, wound his arms round the youth, and strove to dash him to the ground, but exerting his great strength, and incited by the memory of the cruel usage he had received, Claude, with a great effort, lifted the villain from his feet, and threw him from him with violence.

The man reeled and fell backwards, and falling heavily with his head against one of the huge stones forming the fire-place, lay completely stunned upon the floor of the cave. Claude stood panting with the exertion he had used, the perspiration pouring down his forehead and cheeks, gazing at his prostrate foe, with a feeling of indescribable hatred and satisfaction. As he stood thus, a loud voice without the cave, shouted—

“Mister Claude, Mister Claude, for God’s sake answer, if you are anywhere here.”

“Ah, thank God, it is Treestrail!” exclaimed our hero, shouting his name at the top of his voice.

Advancing to the mouth of the cave, he saw Treestrail pushing his way through the bushes.

“Thank God, my dear sir,” exclaimed Mr. Treestrail “that you are safe.”

“Why,” returned Claude; “what could put it into your head that I incurred any danger?”

“Heavens, what has happened to you, sir? your coat is torn, and your face flushed,” questioned Mr. Treestrail, in a voice of great surprise and some anxiety.

“Follow me, and you will see,” answered Claude; “I have that ruffian, Black George, within here; he is quiet enough now; but come in.”

Mr. Treestrail was confounded; he turned pale as he thought of the peril his young master, as he persisted in calling him, incurred; but he followed him into the cave.

Black George was rapidly recovering the stunning blow he had received on the back of his head—his eyes were open, and he made an effort to rise. After a few moments,

he succeeded in sitting up. Mr. Treestrail gazed upon him with profound amazement; the candle threw but a faint light upon the scene, for it had burned down into the iron socket.

"We must be quick, Mr. Treestrail," said Claude, picking up his pistol, "and take this villain with us. It is near sunset, and we have two miles to go."

Mr. Treestrail looked at the man, and then at our hero, thinking how terrible the struggle must have been between two such powerful men.

"Now then, get up!" continued Claude, fixing his eye on the robber, whose scowl was terrible to look at; "for, as I told you before, I will shoot you sooner than let you go."

Slowly the man rose to his feet, passing his hand across his face, wiping away the blood and heat drops, that, mixed together, ran down his cheeks; he then looked Claude full in the face, and said, speaking slowly, but with singular distinctness.

"For what you have done this day, I will probe your heart to the very quick. I'll cool your pride, proud boy—mark my words, if I do not."

"Tush—go on, ruffian," fiercely exclaimed Tregannon; "do you think I heed what comes from such polluted lips. Go first, Mr. Treestrail," he added; "and mark me, villain," turning to Black George, "if you move a step too fast, I'll shoot you as I would a mad dog."

A laugh of derision burst from the man's lips, as our hero passed a pistol to Mr. Treestrail, who pushed his way out from the cave, Black George following, and Claude close upon his steps.

The sun had just gone down as they emerged from the cave; but scarcely had they proceeded a hundred yards before they were suddenly surrounded by eight men, brandishing stout ash-poles, and swearing in a frightful manner that they would take their lives if they did not let their prisoner go.

Claude had his grasp on Black George before he could stir a step.

"Rascals!" he exclaimed, placing the muzzle of his pistol close to his prisoner's head, if you advance another step I will blow his brains out."

"At him, fools!" shouted Black George; "he dare not murder his own father."

They made a rush as he uttered these words; and Claude Tregannon, passionate by nature, and exasperated at the thoughts of the villain escaping, pulled the trigger, the weapon flashed in the pan, and, with a wild laugh, the ruffian sprung amidst the gipsies, though Mr. Treestrail made a grasp at him as he sprang past him."

"Now then, pay them off, Bill!" exclaimed Black George, seizing a stout ash-stick.

"No, no," exclaimed the gipsy, falling back, "we don't want our necks in a halter—we have struck no blow. Cut your lucky now, all we shall do is to prevent them following you."

"Rascals!" cried Claude, "do you know that you have already put your necks in a halter. That villain is a deserter and a robber; you are aiding his escape from justice."

"Blast me if you aint a dutiful son!" exclaimed the gipsy named Bill, "thank your stars, youngster, we don't crack your crown for you."

Before he could utter another word, our hero sprung within his guard, forced the stick from his hand, and dealt him a blow across the head that tumbled him over on his back. With a volley of curses, the gipsies, with Black George at their head, made a rush. It would undoubtedly have fared hard with our hero and Mr. Treestrail, had not loud shouts from the wood suddenly changed their assailants' purpose. In an instant, Gipsy Bill regained his legs, and the rest, without a moment's hesitation, turned round and fled, Black George with the rest. So impetuous and enraged was Claude, that he would have followed, had not Mr. Treestrail caught him by the arm, saying—

"For God's sake, sir, at this hour, and through this entangled wood, do not attempt to pursue the villains! We know that Black George is now in the country, and with the aid of the authorities we can hunt him out."

"No!" bitterly exclaimed Claude, halting in his purpose, "that ruffian will baffle us, mark my words!"

As he spoke, Mr. Treestrail's eldest son and a young lad came running out of the nut-wood and found them.

"Good God, father! who were those men attacking you?"

we saw them from the hill as we were coming to look for you, and shouted as loud as we could."

"Faith it was lucky, Ned, you came," said Mr. Tree-trail; "but what brought you in search of me?"

"Why, Mr. Bonville, the lawyer, from London, arrived a little while after you departed, and he was impatient to see you. I went to grandmother's, and she said you had crossed the river to go to look for the gentleman who lodged with her, so I also crossed and took the lad from the Ferry House to show me the way you went."

"Who is Mr. Bonville?" said Claude, gloomily, as he walked on.

"He is the agent over the property," answered Mr. Tree-trail, "and he comes about this time of the year to take the rents of the large farms and look over the property; and a very gentlemanly good sort of a man he is."

"But what induced you, my good friend," inquired Claude, making an effort to recover his usual good and even temper, "what induced you to follow me this evening?"

Mr. Tree-trail coloured very much, as he replied, with a slight sigh—

"Why, to say the truth, sir, a dream of my mother's and some intelligence I picked up about a gang of poachers infesting the preserves on Lord Falmouth's domain; that cave is on his Lordship's property, not far from the pheasant preserves. I was told that it was dangerous to be alone in that wild part of the country, so I followed you over, and not finding you after a strict search, and getting alarmed, I kept shouting till you heard me."

They walked on for a few moments without a word; Mr. Tree-trail saw his companion was greatly excited and vexed, therefore he remained silent; but just as they came within sight of the Ferry House, our hero turned round, and taking Mr. Tree-trail by the hand and pressing it kindly, said—

"My good friend, do not think me ungrateful for all the kindness and affection you have shown me. I am hasty by nature, and having heard much while concealed in the cave, that pained my heart, and recalled the past, I am quite overpowered and stunned by that villain's escape, for I feel satisfied he will evade all pursuit. As to the gipsies

who aided his flight, if we attempted any proceedings against them it would lead to useless exposure and much talk; for, from what I heard of the conversation between Black George and one of them named Bill, I find that the former was alone concerned in my abduction."

"My dear sir," said Mr. Treestrail, I tell you, in my humble opinion, the best way to proceed is to send word to the Captain of the port at Falmouth that a deserter from—— beg your pardon, you did not mention the name of the ship—you said he deserted from——"

"No, there's the difficulty, he never mentioned the name of the ship himself, but I heard him say that he had been tracked into these parts, so that we may describe him, at all events; though you may depend on it he will not now adopt the gipsy costume or keep with them, as he must know I overheard all he said. However, we must try all means to get hold of him—not that we shall learn the truth, for I feel satisfied that man would die under the hangman's hands, exulting at having crushed my hopes of proving my birth. He will, if taken, be claimed by the Captain of the ship from which he deserted, and be executed for wounding his officer and deserting. Therefore his fate is certain; but I will tell you, my good friend, what we may do: send to Truro for a couple of constables, and with them we will visit the cave so that they may be able to state on oath what they see and find. They will discover the garments of a child—in a perishing state to be sure—still they are important, for it will easily be proved that they are not those belonging to a child born in a wealthy position, and they will prove also that there was another child of the same age as myself with those who planned my abduction, so that with the links we have, something like the truth may be elicited."

He spoke with the enthusiasm of youth full of hope and belief in the justice and laws of the land.

"I will ride over to Truro to-morrow morning," said Mr. Treestrail, "and see Mr. Vigors; he was much esteemed by your father, though at that time only young, he has since become much liked, and for an attorney," here Mr. Treestrail smiled—"he is considered a very just and conscientious man. I will, if you permit me, put him in possession of all the facts relative to your position, and take

"I am perfectly willing," said Claude; "but recollect my funds are but trifling to commence a suit at law on as yet but a weak foundation."

"You may rest assured, my dear sir," said Mr. Treestrail, earnestly, "that Mr. Vigors will not involve you in any law charges or commence a suit without he sees sure grounds to work upon. I know, of course, but little of the law myself; but it strikes me that if you claim the Tregannon estates, as the only son of the late Sir Henry Claude Tregannon, that James Tregannon, not daring to show himself in this country, will hardly be able to bring forward proofs that you are not the legal heir."

"Well," replied our hero, thoughtfully, "see Mr. Vigors, at all events, and get a couple of constables; for after an examination of the cave, I must proceed to London. I cannot live in idleness; something, my good friend, I must do, for you well know all law proceedings are proverbially tedious, and should the lawyers consider my case doubtful, I must prepare myself to struggle through the world by my own exertions. Do not look sad, my worthy friend, I do not, I assure you, covet wealth, I but require name," he added with a flushing cheek, "a name I can call my own, without any one daring to dispute it, and most solemnly I say, let them but own I am the son of Sir Henry Claude Tregannon, and the cursed gold they all so covet may remain theirs. Did I not feel in my heart that I am Claude Tregannon, did a shadow of doubt haunt my mind, I would die sooner than have the finger of scorn pointed at me as an imposter."

"My dear, dear sir," exclaimed Mr. Treestrail, with emotion, and respectfully and affectionately pressing Claude's hand, "there is not, I know, the faintest shadow of doubt; and even if, in a court, you failed in establishing your rights, there would not be a soul in that court, who heard the case, that would not leave it firmly convinced in their own hearts that you were Sir Henry Tregannon's son."

They had now reached the ferry, and the conversation ceased.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE following day, by orders of the Captain of the Port, to whom the particulars related in the previous chapter were made known, a party of sailors from a King's ship, in the harbour of Falmouth, were scouring the country in search of Black George; that search diligently excited by the information that Lieutenant Hart, the officer he had so cruelly wounded at Portsmouth, was not expected to live.

The requisite information, and the description of the deserter's person, were sent to most of the sea-ports. Several of the gipsies were apprehended, but the man named Bill was not amongst them; they denied any knowledge of the culprit; and as no charge was made against them by either our hero or Mr. Treestrail, they were not detained; in fact, the former could not see that anything could be gained by charging them with an assault, and bringing himself needlessly before the public.

Mr. Vigors sent down two respectable constables to visit the cave, and note down everything they saw there, so as to be able to give evidence hereafter. Claude Tregannon received a most kind and polite note, at the same time, from Mr. Vigors, anxiously requesting to see him at his earliest convenience. Accordingly, having prepared a torch, our hero, Mr. Treestrail, his son, and the two constables, set out for the cave.

On entering, they lighted their torch, and commenced a careful investigation. The two constables scrupulously remarking all they saw, though by no means aware of the principal use of their evidence; however, nothing particular attracted their attention till they came to the garments of the child, which, though decayed by damp, could be easily identified as having belonged to a child of about three years of age, and made of strong coarse materials, such as would be used by the labouring classes; but as they moved them, and were carefully placing them in a bag, one article fell from their folds, along with a torn and defaced book, that at once attracted the attention of all.

"My God! look here," exclaimed Mr. Treestrail, picking up carefully the dropped article, upon which Claude Tregannon gazed with an indescribable feeling of relief.

"This is very strange." of the constables; "this

is a child's lace collar—a most expensive and beautiful piece of lace—and in almost perfect preservation.”

“Yes,” said Mr. Treestrail, with much emotion, his eyes fixed on the piece of lace; “I remember well that such collars as this were worn by the late Baronet's children; and you, sir,” he remarked, in a low voice to Claude, “always wore them—this I consider a very important discovery. It was remarked at the time the child's body was found, that some of the articles of clothing were missing, but were supposed to have been washed off with the action of the tides—these other articles were, no doubt, on the body of the other child.”

The collar was carefully put aside, and then Claude Tregannon said—

“There is no doubt but that my sisters will remember this collar, which is somewhat remarkable, or one of the servants, who had charge of me at the time, if they can be found.”

“Oh,” eagerly interrupted Mr. Treestrail, “Anne Poïwell, the young woman who had charge of you, is, at this moment, living with your sister, Miss Mary, who is greatly attached to her, I hear. She has never been quite herself since that period, and never, from the beginning, would admit that the body found was her master's son. Now let us see what is in this torn and defaced book.”

One of the surprised constables held the light, and our hero examined the book, which proved to be an old almanack of the year 1773—it was much torn, and the writing on the blank pages almost illegible—it seemed to have been used as a kind of memorandum-book, in which the owner made curious entries. Several were read—but having no reference to anything they had cognizance of—till, at last, opposite the thirteenth day of July, was written—

“I was married—don't consider the number thirteen lucky.”

Then followed several other items—then again, on the eighteenth of March—

“I won three hundred pounds from James Tregannon at the races at Exeter—same night, made a bad hedge, lost three hundred and seventy pounds.”

Two or three pages followed, nearly defaced—the next remark was—

"Left London—found the place getting hot. Thirteenth of October, met James Tregannon in Leeds. Thirteenth of April, 178—, met him again on Truro Common—always thought something crooked would happen on the thirteenth—for on the thirteenth of May my child was drowned in the Fal, and I never recovered the body."

All paused and looked at each other with a very serious expression of countenance.

"It is very evident to me," exclaimed our hero, that "this was written by the man called Black George—and that it was his son who was found, and substituted for me. James Tregannon and his wife must have done this—you see the writer of this says, his child's body was never found, so that he must have left this place before James Tregannon made the discovery."

"There is a good deal to perplex in this," replied Mr. Treestrail; "but still the conclusion is very evident—the date in that book is, as well as I can recollect, the very day or two after your abduction; this man, also, seems to have moved in a better class of society, to judge by many of the remarks in that almanack."

"These garments no doubt are those stripped from the body of Black George's child, when found," observed our hero, who having read several other sentences, all injured by damp, but still legible, gave the almanack to be put up with the rest of the articles. And after spending half-an-hour more in searching, and not finding anything worth remarking, they left the cave, and set out on their return.

The following day Claude, considerably elated by the discovery they had made in the cave, set out to walk to Truro, to visit Mr. Vigors, who received him in the kindest and most gratifying manner. Before he made any remarks concerning the things found in the cave, he requested a clear account of all the incidents in our hero's life, particularly his memory concerning his very earliest recollection, to all of which Mr. Vigors listened with great attention, and as he concluded said—

"My, dear sir, the moment you entered the room and I looked into your features, I said to myself:—This is beyond a doubt, Sir Henry Tregannon's son—I could not be mistaken, and when I closed my eyes and listened to your voice,

I could have sworn my noble and generous patron was speaking to me; your relation of events is clear and striking, but your discovery in the cave yesterday is most important, establishing beyond a shadow of doubt, two things: first, that your father's child was stolen, next that the body found was decidedly not that of Claude Tregannon. Now the grand point to prove will be that you are the child stolen—but I will not weary you with law technicalities; I am quite satisfied and will shortly proceed to London, and have an interview with Mr. Saunders, the confidential friend and brother-lawyer of your lamented friend, Mr. Parks. These recent discoveries will also have a considerable effect upon him. Before this you really had nothing but your singular resemblance, as it could be styled, to bring forward to support your claims. For the anonymous letter which is supposed to have been written by Miss Stonehenge would, in point of law, be of no value. Now, the case is different. You have, my dear sir, not seen any of your sisters since your abduction; you mentioned that your eldest sister, Lady Treacastle, constantly refused to listen to any communication made to her by your aunt, Mrs. Bond, concerning you. Now she may, and, I assure you, I think she does believe she is or was right in doing so; she is a most amiable, generous, and charming woman; you look surprised, but you are not aware that before Sir Henry's death I was appointed, by Sir Charles Treacastle, agent over his property, and also his law adviser, and am now occupied about his very valuable estate, or rather Lady Treacastle's estate, of Pentorven, left her by your father; that is, bestowed upon her as a marriage portion; then it was worth perhaps two thousand a-year. The mines, on that part of the property would now sell for nearly eighty thousand pounds. Have you never, my dear sir, felt a desire to behold your sisters; excuse me if I touch on delicate ground—"

"Nay, Mr. Vigors," interrupted Claude, "I feel your kindness more than I can express; I have always experienced a strong and ardent desire to behold my sisters, but feeling my singular situation, and so often hearing my beloved aunt speak of Lady Treacastle, and declare that she was so obstinate in her opinion, that it really was her brother who was found, that I felt loth to intrude myself

into her presence. My youngest sister eagerly desired to see me, but Lady Treastle prevented even her from following the dictates of her heart."

"Well, my dear sir, you can gratify that desire most readily. Your youngest sister is unmarried, and is still with Lady Treastle. I have just finished some documents I was preparing for her ladyship to sign, and intended sending my son Robert with them to-morrow; he has just returned from Cambridge; she has never seen him; take those papers and announce yourself as Mr. Robert Vigors, it is a very innocent ruse, and whatever may be the consequences, I will bear the brunt. You will most likely be received in the drawing-room of Treastle; in that room, over the mantel-piece, hangs a magnificent portrait of your father, taken, I fancy, when about your age; it formerly hung in the green room of Tregannon House. I will dictate nothing to you with respect to the interview—let nature speak for itself—well, what say you?"

"That I will go," answered the young man rousing himself from a deep reverie, into which he had fallen. "Your intentions are most kind, and whatever the result, believe me, my dear sir, your efforts for my benefit will never be forgotten."

"I am rejoiced that you consent," replied Mr. Vigors, "for I am sanguine as to the result; I have a vast deal to say to you, especially about James Tregannon, whom I firmly believe had a hand in the melancholy fate of your father, but will defer further converse on those subjects till we meet at Mr. Saunders's in London; and now, will you honour me with your company to dinner; only my own family, three girls, and my son, Robert, and though last, not least, I assure you, my good wife. I shall simply introduce you as Mr. Bond; you will have quite light enough to return to Tregannon after tea, and after to-morrow, say you will start for Treastle; it is only seven miles from Helstone, in fact on the estuary of the Helstone, called the Loo Pool."

Our hero could make no objection to the kind invitation of Mr. Vigors, and passed a very cheerful evening; the Misses Vigors were remarkably nice girls, the second very handsome, the son a sensible, quiet, clever youth, extremely good-natured.

The whole family evidently looked upon their visitor with admiration, his fine majestic person and remarkably handsome features, always struck the beholder, but his gentle pleasing manner, so winning and so unassuming, won the immediate attention and esteem of those he became intimate with.

Mr. Robert Vigors insisted on accompanying him half way home, and during the walk they chatted cheerfully upon college life, and the difference between Oxford and Cambridge.

Robert Vigors was intended for the bar; readily perceiving that there was some private matter between his father and his guest, he was much too discreet and sensible to touch upon any subject relative to business between them.

The next day Claude Tregannon informed Mr. Treestrail how pleased he was with Mr. Vigors and his family, and that he had promised to go to Treacastle the next day, and be introduced to his sisters as Mr. Robert Vigors—Mr. Treestrail looked delighted.

"She will recognise you in a moment, mark my words, my dear sir; she was very fond of you before her marriage; not that I mean to say that Sir Charles altered her in her affection, far from it, for he is an easy good-natured, kind-hearted man, a little perhaps inclined to accumulate money; they have three children, two girls and a boy, the eldest not more than ten; Lady Treacastle was here some two years back, and her little boy, Henry, a lovely child, so put me in mind of you when about his age, that it quite overcame me."

"Well, I trust," said Claude, "that no unpleasant result will follow my intended visit. Did you hear how the search after that villain Black George succeeded?"

"Totally failed in finding, as yet, the slightest trace of him," answered Mr. Treestrail, "I fear he has a way of getting amongst the miners, if so, he would baffle any search made after him; as you may fancy they are a strange body of men, our Cornish miners, and if he has any connexion amongst them, down in their mines he could be concealed for years."

Claude fell into deep thought, and then sat down and wrote to Fanny Fleetwood, a full account of all that had

occurred to him, enclosing it in one to Madame D'Arblay, and faithfully promising to be in London at the period fixed upon.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TRECASTLE, the family seat of the Trecastles, for more than three centuries, was one of the most picturesque and beautiful residences in Cornwall, being built upon a richly wooded eminence, above the Loo Pool as it is styled, a species of lake formed by the shingle of the sea beach obstructing the waters of the Helstone river. The scenery of this beautiful lake, which is nearly seven miles in circumference, is scarcely to be surpassed by any in Cornwall; rocks rise abruptly from the margin, while the sides are clothed with a fine hanging wood; to the south the view is terminated by the faint streak which seems to unite the sea with the firmament, while to the north, hill retires behind hill in aerial perspective, catching the fleeting but beautiful effects of light and shade, and perpetually presenting a new appearance to the admirer of nature.

From the brow of the hill just above the Loo Pool, Claude Tregannon pulled up his horse, about two o'clock of the same day he had left Truro to gaze down upon the Loo lake and the mansion of Sir Charles Treastle on the opposite bank. He was at once struck with admiration at its aspect and situation; excepting its front, it appeared surrounded by fine woods, rising in heavy clusters over every part of the grounds. The mansion, as he proceeded and turned the extremity of the lake, appeared partly ancient and partly modern. The front of the old building faced the west, that towards the south had been recently erected by Sir Charles himself, and opened on a lawn of great beauty, which extended to the waters; a handsome boat-house was built upon the edge of the rocks, and floating gracefully on the still placid surface of the lake was a gay pleasure boat. His features wore a very serious expression, and his heart palpitated not little as, having traversed the avenue, he halted his horse at the front door of the mansion. A groom came to take it, casting a look as he did so at the stranger's noble and prepossessing features.

"Shall I take the horse to the stables, sir?" he asked, touching his hat respectfully.

Claude hesitated a little, and then said—

"May I trouble you to walk him about. I do not know how long my business may detain me; if I am delayed, I will let you know."

"Certainly, sir. But, short or long, a rub down and a feed will not hurt him."

"Well, take him to the stables," replied our hero, approaching the front door, which was wide open, shewing a noble hall of great height, with galleries and a stained-glass window at the back. As he was about to enter, a servant out of livery came forward—

"Is Lady Treastle at home and disengaged?" he inquired, recovering his usual firmness and decision.

"Yes, sir, her ladyship is within," replied the man, "Who shall I say, sir?" opening, as he spoke, the door of a reception-room.

"A gentleman on business from Mr. Vigors of Truro."

The man disappeared, but, in a few moments returned saying—

"Will you please to follow me, sir; Mr. Robert Vigors, I presume."

Claude felt his cheek flush, but he merely bowed his head, and followed the man—ascending a noble flight of marble stairs, and traversing part of the gallery, the servant threw open a door, saying—

"Mr. Robert Vigors, your ladyship."

Claude Tregannon, with a heightened colour, but a firm step, pressing his lips hard, entered the room.

At a glance he perceived there were two ladies in the noble saloon into which he advanced, one reclining negligently on an ottoman, the other sitting at a table, which was covered with various kinds of fancy work, at which she appeared employed. The tall commanding figure of Claude as he slowly approached the ladies, attracted at once their attention. Lady Treastle—the lady on the sofa—rose from her seat, advanced a step and was about to speak, when her eyes rested full upon the features of our hero. For an instant she appeared transfixed to the spot, she became deadly pale, and sinking back upon the sofa, ex-

claimed, in a trembling agitated voice, seizing at the same time a smelling-bottle from the table—

“Good God, sir, who are you? or is this a delusion of my senses?”

The other lady, a fair and lovely girl, of some four-and-twenty years, sprang to her feet, gazed wildly upon the visitor with clasped hands as she awaited, in intense agitation, a reply. Claude himself was greatly agitated, he gazed from one sister to the other till the tears came into his eyes, and then gently taking the hand of his youngest sister, he said in a voice of excessive emotion—

“Mary, Mary, have you lost all memory of your unfortunate brother?”

“Ah, my God!” exclaimed the pale and agitated girl, “my heart told me who you were, my own dear, dear brother.”

And without the slightest hesitation she threw her arms round his neck, and bending her beautiful head upon his shoulder, burst into a flood of tears.

Claude pushed back the dark tresses from her fair brow and kissed her; she raised her head, gazed anxiously and fondly into his features, and turning to the agitated Lady Treastle, said—

“Oh! Julia, could we ever have doubted, had we looked on this face—there,” and she pointed to the portrait of Sir Henry Claude Tregannon, that hung right opposite them, “can there be a shadow of a doubt remaining?”

Lady Treastle was powerfully agitated, so much so that for several minutes she was utterly unable to utter a word. There seemed to be a violent struggle in her heart, but Claude holding his sister Mary’s hand, came close to his elder sister; he took her passive hand—it was as cold as ice, and pressing it to his lips, said in his touching and melodious voice—

“Oh, Julia, do you still doubt that I am your brother?”

Nature triumphed, and that voice so remarkable sunk into her heart, it awakened all the past, it thrilled through every fibre of her frame; the recollection of how cruel and harsh her conduct had been—though naturally affectionate and generous—distressed her, but giving way at last, she bent down her head, and with streaming eyes, kissed his

cheek, and putting her arm round his neck, she said in a low voice—

“Can you forgive me, Claude? from this hour, I will acknowledge my brother, were the whole world to oppose me.”

“Oh, God be praised!” exclaimed Claude passionately as he rapturously embraced his sister, “this moment richly repays me for my childhood’s wrongs and sufferings, and the hours of doubt and the bitter reflections of my later years.”

The brother sat down between his two sisters, who regarded with undisguised affection and wonder his flushed and handsome features.

“Ah!” observed Lady Treastle, “had I listened to the earnest pleading of our aunt, I should not now have to reproach myself, and my beloved father’s only son would not have remained years neglected and disowned.”

“Nay, Julia, you reproach yourself unjustly; you acted, I feel quite satisfied, from conviction. Providence has been most merciful and kind to me, for I was snatched from shame, perhaps degradation, just in time to save me, and placed under the care of the kindest and noblest of human beings.”

“Ah, Julia!” said Mary with a look of delight at her brother, and pressing his hand fondly, “I always maintained that Claude did not perish in the river, and that some day or other the truth would be revealed.”

Lady Treastle’s cheek flushed a little, but she replied—

“The fact is, dear Claude, I always considered you an imposter, imposed upon aunt for some purpose or other, and I steeled my heart against all her appeals; to-day Sir Charles is gone to Penzance, and will not be back till to-morrow; we shall be alone, and can listen to your history. Oh, I forgot, Mary, you expect Lord Penchurch this evening.”

Mary coloured slightly, but replied—

“He said he would ride over some time this evening, but it will be late. So now, dear Claude, do give us a long detail of the past, tell us everything—ah, that horrid James Tregannon, he holds your title and estates, but surely there will be no difficulty in dispossessing him.”

“Never heed the dross, sweet sister,” said Claude with

a happy smile, "the treasure I coveted is here. My name I have taken; all I now wish is, that the whole world shall acknowledge that my right to it is clear and undeniable. As to the property or the estates, they are as nothing in the balance. You shall hear all my past life and the recent discoveries I have made, and you will then be able to judge what chance I have of recovering my birthright. My dear father's name is dearer to me than any other thing the world can bestow. My heart is engaged to one as fair and lovely as any in the land of Britain, and the only drawback to my felicity is, that till the law gives it to me, I really have no name to bestow upon her."

It was some time, however, before our hero could commence his narrative, both sisters having so many questions to ask; but at length Claude, with a happy smile, and with Mary's arm lovingly round his neck, positively refused to answer another question till his story was told.

He commenced his disclosures with his cruel sufferings while with Black George, which brought tears into the eyes of both sisters, and it was not till the first bell for dinner pealed through the house, that he brought his narrative to a close.

Most deeply were the sisters interested with their brother's recital of incidents, and a shudder of horror crept through their frames at the idea that James Tregannon was possibly the destroyer of their father.

Although convinced before that Claude was her brother, doubly so did Lady Treastle become after hearing his plain narrative of facts.

"You remember, Julia," inquired Claude, "when I cut my arm in the singular manner Mr. Treestrail mentioned to me, and the curious mark it left? I retain it to this day."

"Ah! I remember it well, and the grief that worthy man felt, considering himself the cause of the accident."

"There is the mark, like a white thread," and as he spoke, Claude pushed up his coat sleeve, and both sisters saw, some inches below the elbow, the scar he spoke of."

"I require no marks or other conviction, dear Claude," said Lady Treastle, "than one glance at those features, and the peculiar tone of voice, so like my poor father's; besides, near your sister Mary, you could never be taken for

any other than her brother, your resemblance is so very great. Now you shall see my little Henry; he is the image of what you were in infancy. There are some families, it is well known, that retain, through centuries, their characteristics and resemblance. Look at all the family pictures in the Tregannon gallery, and you can trace distinctly the same features through the whole race. Ha! here come my little family."

The sound of the merry laugh of happy childhood reached their ears; the door suddenly opened, and two beautiful girls of twelve and eight entered the room, followed by a lovely boy of about three years of age. They were bounding into the room, full of life and spirits, when the sight of Claude, standing up and looking with much emotion upon them, caused them to halt.

"Come here, Ellen," said Lady Trecastle, "and kiss your uncle, Claude Tregannon."

The name pronounced by a sister caused a strange thrill of pleasure to the heart of our hero. Ellen, the eldest, with a look of wonder at the tall commanding form of her uncle, came readily forward, and, as Claude kissed her cheek, and spoke some words of flattery and kindness in his musical voice, the child said, as she advanced close to her mother's side—

"Oh dear, how glad I am to have such a handsome uncle. Where did he come from, 'ma? and what a sweet voice he has, and so like Aunt Mary's."

"He is Mary's brother, my love."

Claude having kissed his other little niece, who was somewhat timid, now sat down with the fine, free, and beautiful boy, the future Sir Henry Trecastle, on his knee. The child, as children will do, took at once a singular liking to his uncle. He looked eagerly into his face, talked to him, and kissed him as affectionately as if he had known him from his earliest recollection. The tears were in the mother's eyes, and Mary walked to the window to hide her emotion, saying to herself—

"Nature speaks forcibly in that child's words and actions. With no other stranger has he ever been so. To Lord Penchurch he shows a decided aversion, and yet he is tall and handsome; and a year ago he tried all kinds of ways to please that child." Mary sighed—why, time will tell

"Now Claude," said Lady Trecastle, as he led his sister to the dining-room, "resume the name you are entitled to, backed by your own family, who with joy, pride, and affection acknowledge you. The law may create delays in conferring your title, but the law cannot deprive you of your name, and James Tregannon can never dare to dispute your birth."

"I will maintain it till death, Julia, against the world," said our hero.

The amazement of the domestics of Trecastle, and they were numerous, was indeed great, when they learned that the handsome stranger was their lady's brother—no other than Sir Henry Claude Tregannon, he that was supposed to be drowned, long years back, in the river Fal.

A rather affecting scene occurred just as the party left the dining-saloon, and were returning to the drawing-room. A woman of some six or nine and thirty years, pale as death, rushed forward, heedless of all observers, and threw herself, with hysterical emotion, into the arms of Claude. The woman had fainted through excess of feeling.

"Good heavens! I forgot to break the intelligence to Anne," said Mary Tregannon, applying, at the same time, means to recover her.

"Who is she?" asked our hero, very much interested.

"You may forget her, Claude, but she never forgot you, nor let me forget you either, had I been inclined. This is Anne Polwell, the poor girl who had the care of you the day you so unaccountably were lost—she has remained a most devoted and affectionate creature to me, since the day of your disappearance, for she scouted the idea of your being dead, and indeed, but for the most positive assurance of Miss Pritchard, that the body found was yours, I doubt if any one would have maintained that opinion; but since that period, she has been subject to great fits of melancholy, and indeed rarely seems to enjoy anything."

Two female attendants were summoned, and the poor woman was removed, but not before she had somewhat recovered, and heard Claude express himself most kindly and gratefully for her remembrance.

"Ah, my God, they would not believe me. Could any living being doubt and see his beautiful features?" she exclaimed to her fellow servants, as they assisted her to her room.

Lady Treacastle wishing to send off a letter that evening to Penzance, to break the intelligence to Sir Charles, Mary and Claude proceeded to walk round the lawn; it was a most lovely evening, the setting sun just gilding the waters of the lake, and the deep shadows of the lofty trees on the western shore stretching far across the clear and unruffled surface.

"I wanted to ask you a question, Mary," said Claude, as they proceeded along the margin, both feeling so happy—Mary rejoicing in her heart of hearts, at the restoration of her brother, and that brother all that a sister's love could wish.

"Well, dear Claude, what is that question?"

"You mentioned, during our conversation before dinner, that you expected a visit from Lord Penchurch. Is it Lord Penchurch or his son, in the ——— Dragoons? not that he can be Lord Penchurch either, unless his father be dead."

"Both the father and the son you speak of, Claude," returned Mary, with a very serious expression of features, "have been dead nearly two years,—the father, from an attack of gout, and Captain Adolphus Penchurch, about eighteen months, from a fall from his horse."

"Good God," exclaimed Claude, with a start his sister observed, and which caused her cheek to turn pale. "Then the Honourable Augustus Penchurch has succeeded to the title and estates?"

Claude looked into his sister's expressive features with some anxiety.

"Why, how is this, dear Claude?" asked Mary, a little agitated as well as surprised, "you seem to know his lordship."

"No, Mary, I do not know his lordship; but three years ago, I was at Oxford with the Honourable Augustus Penchurch; he was five or six years older than myself, and quitted it about eight or nine months after my entrance there. I suppose, dear Mary," continued our hero, making an effort to speak cheerfully, "this is an affair of the heart between you and Lord Penchurch; I know he was a very handsome young man."

Mary looked up into her brother's face, she was a little paler than usual, but with a smile that rendered her features lovely, she said—

"Cannot you give him a better character, Claude, than that of being a very handsome man?"

"Tell me, Mary, how far your heart is engaged, and how long you have known his lordship; you see I am taking the privilege of a brother already, and perhaps——"

"No perhaps with me, dear Claude; to me, it is a vast and glorious blessing that I have a brother; and my dear aunt Bond—oh, how she loved you!—in her letters wrote that you were ——"

"Come, come, Mary," interrupted the young man, playfully, "I will not listen to any account of my amiable qualities even from my sweet sister, so let me hear all about your intercourse with his handsome lordship. If he has gained your heart, Mary, he has gained a treasure."

"I ought to call you to order now, Master Claude," returned Mary, laughing; "however, I will now tell you how I am situated with respect to his lordship."

CHAPTER XIX.

"AFTER my dear father's melancholy death," began Mary Tregannon, "Helen and I came to live with Lady Trecastle. There is no kinder man breathing than Sir Charles, and yet he has acquired the character of loving inordinately to accumulate wealth, whereas no man in the county is more liberal and generous; his love of speculation and of engaging in commercial affairs has led, no doubt, to this conclusion; his sinking for mines and his success in his operations have also created the envy of many, but to the poor man and the honest he is always a friend. When you go amongst his numerous tenants, you will learn his real character. Lord Penchurch's mansion and estate adjoins my brother-in-law's, and they have been intimate for years. Augustus Penchurch and myself are much about the same age; we were playfellows first, and as we grew in years we supposed ourselves in love with each other."

"Supposed?" interrupted Claude Tregannon, with a smile; "that is but a poor word, Mary dear, to express '*le grand passion*.' There must be very little love in the case, if it rests on supposition."

"*Cela se peut*—but I fancy such was really the case. Well, years rolled on; Augustus was a younger son, with but small expectations. I do not know how it was, but, about two years and a half ago, he extracted a promise from me, that I would accept his hand, the day his father procured him the appointment he had in view. Six months after, his brother became Lord Penchurch, and, unfortunately, some months after, was killed by a fall from his horse, and thus Augustus succeeded to the title, and, as it turns out, to a rather heavily mortgaged estate. Now, since that event, I think, or I fancy, Augustus much changed in manner. My fortune, handsome for a younger son, is small for an impoverished lord, and I really think his lordship would back out of his engagement if he found an opportunity."

"And would you, my sweet Mary, unite yourself to a man of whom you entertain such an opinion?"

"It was never my intention, Claude; but, Heavens! here he is coming up the avenue."

Claude started, and felt his cheek flush; his first idea was to leave his sister and to meet his lordship alone; but Mary instinctively clung to his arm; the next moment his lordship dismounted, and, throwing the reins to his groom, advanced.

When close beside them, he looked full in the face of Claude, and stood astounded; his cheek grew pale, as he exclaimed, in a voice almost inarticulate with rage—

"Miss Tregannon, are you aware on whose arm you are leaning?"

In person, Lord Penchurch was as tall as Claude Tregannon, and, at a first glance, though not so graceful in manner, appeared nearly as powerfully made—his features were remarkably handsome, and yet there was a something not pleasing in the eye, and the curl of the upper-lip, especially when in anger.

No sooner had he pronounced the words—"Miss Tregannon, are you aware on whose arm you are leaning?" than Mary, with a flushed cheek, replied—

"Perfectly, my lord—I lean on the arm of my brother, Sir Henry Claude Tregannon."

A laugh that caused Mary to turn pale followed this announcement.

"You are deceived, Miss Tregannon; this youth once passed himself as the nephew of Henry Edgar Bond, of Grange House, on whose death it turned out that he was an imposter, the son of a gipsy tinker."

Mary trembled in every limb, but for her companion's arm, she would have fallen to the ground. But, strange to say, our hero remained perfectly collected, and as calm as if he had been styled the son of a duke.

"My lord," he said, speaking slowly and distinctly, "I once chastised you for an act I will not name, as I would not wish to tinge my sister's cheek with the blush of shame, at having ever listened to professions of affection from such a man. You assert I am a gipsy's son; I have had the forbearance to listen calmly to this assertion; but now hear me—I tell you that I am Henry Claude Tregannon, and if you say this assertion is untrue, or use again the words you have just pronounced, I will lay that horsewhip in your hand, upon your back, so beware, my lord, what you say or do."

Lord Penchurch shook with rage, his features becoming actually convulsed with the struggle within.

"Curse you!" he almost frantically exclaimed; "I will even degrade myself and meet you. I would rather see you dead at my feet than the vilest dog that ever crawled out of a kennel."

And turning rapidly away, he hurried to his horse, threw himself into the saddle, and galloped, to the great amazement of his groom, furiously through the lodge-gates.

Had he remained a moment longer, Henry would have forgotten himself, and felled him to the earth; turning round, he found his gentle sister seated on a rustic bench, weeping bitterly.

"Oh, Mary, dear Mary, what have I brought upon you!"

"Good Heavens! Claude," exclaimed the poor girl, looking up, and catching his hand in hers; "do you suppose I weep for anything that bad man could say to me? Oh, no, no, no; I bless God for my escape from perhaps years of misery; no, I weep, my beloved brother, that your noble, generous heart should have to bear the cruel indignity that cowardly wretch thought to inflict upon you."

"Thank God, if that's all, Mary!" answered Claude, cheerfully; "his words are too impotent to hurt me. Still it puzzles me to think how he gained the information he seems to have obtained of me."

"Ah! I see now," said Mary, brightening up; "his mother, Lady Penchurch, is an aunt of Mr. Curtis Bond's."

"Then, of course, Lord Penchurch is intimate with that miserly wretch."

"Most intimate; indeed, should Mr. Bond never marry, he considers himself next heir. The Grange estates, I think I heard Sir Charles say, he had the power to will to whom he pleased. Now, Lady Penchurch is only Mr. Curtis Bond's aunt by marriage; therefore his lordship's relationship is very remote. What is the cause of his inveteracy towards you?"

"To-morrow, my dear sister, you shall hear how his lordship and I first became friends, and then mortal enemies. It is a very short tale, and common enough in this world, I am sorry to say. I trust Julia will not feel hurt at the events of this evening."

"You need not fear that," answered Mary, "she knows I had made up my mind to break off my engagement with his lordship. Julia never liked him much, and I cannot think how I ever entertained the idea of becoming his wife."

She was right: Lady Treacastle only felt hurt at the insult offered to her brother; and as Mary did not hear the parting words of Lord Penchurch, they were not alarmed, believing that all the mischief was over. Mr. Robert Vigors' horse was sent back the next morning with a long letter from Claude Tregannon, and the documents signed by her ladyship; also a groom despatched for our hero's portmanteau, as he intended staying at Treacastle till within a week of his intended journey to London.

He did not bestow a thought upon the threat held out by Lord Penchurch at parting. For although when at Oxford he was remarkable for his skill in pistol shooting, he was never known to resent an insult, and acquired rather a doubtful name for courage. Now, Claude Tregannon, though he never exhibited his skill, was scarcely to be surpassed in the use of the gun or pistol, or in any athletic or bodily feats of strength. We will anticipate his

communication to his sister, and briefly relate the cause of his enmity with his lordship, then the Honourable Augustus Penchurch.

Claude was scarcely more than eighteen when he went to Oxford; Augustus Penchurch was at least four or five years older, fully formed, possessing considerable strength, and expert at most games and exercises, pulled a good oar, and could drink hard. Now Claude surpassed him in everything, excepting the last accomplishment; like his uncle, Mr. Bond, he could enjoy a bottle of wine, but he never could be persuaded to drink to excess. The two young men came in contact several times, in boating, in cricket, and wrestling, and invariably the Honourable Augustus Penchurch was beaten. He then considered our hero the nephew of Mr. Henry Bond, till accidentally mentioning his name before Lady Penchurch, her ladyship remarked—

"Nephew to Mr. Bond of 'Grange,' you must mistake, Augustus, Mr. Bond has no nephew, not even by marriage; Lady Treastle and Mary and Helen Tregannon, are Mrs. Bond's own nieces and Mr. Bond's nieces of course by marriage, but nephew he has none, or my nephew, Curtis Bond, would be cut out of the succession to the 'Grange Estate.'"

"Well, that's droll enough," returned the Honourable Augustus; "he bears the name of Henry Bond, and is known as Mr. Bond's nephew by everyone."

One evening just three days before Augustus Penchurch left Oxford, Claude Tregannon was returning from a solitary ramble along the banks of the Thames, and was crossing a very lonely shady lane, when a smothered shriek from a female the other side of the edge caused him to leap over to inquire into the cause; to his extreme astonishment and disgust, he beheld a very interesting looking girl, kneeling at the feet of a man, striving to hold his hand—

"Fool," exclaimed the man, and raising his hand, he pushed the poor girl with violence to the ground. As he turned, the man came face to face with Claude. It was Augustus Penchurch,—they had not met since his return to college.

"Coward! is it thus you treat a woman?" and in the indignation of the moment, Claude threw him against the hedge.

Augustus Penchurch had a stout blackthorn stick in his hand ; furious with rage, he rushed upon his adversary and aimed a blow at his head. But our hero, avoiding the weapon, struck him a tremendous blow in the chest, which stretched him at his feet. The poor girl had fainted, and without heeding the Honourable Augustus, Claude lifted her from the ground, and bore her towards the river, only a few yards distant. He had recognised her at a glance as the only daughter of a poor curate of R——, whose cottage was only a mile distant. He sprinkled her face with water, and after some moments of insensibility, she unclosed her eyes. When she beheld Claude's fixed upon hers, she shuddered and closed them again, saying in a scarcely audible voice—

“My God, my God, I'm ruined.”

This is an oft-told tale, and we will not pursue it further. Claude saw her to her father's cottage-door, and returned to Oxford, fully expecting the next morning to hear from the indignant aristocrat ; but that day passed and the next, and he neither saw nor heard from him. He did not mention his adventure to any one, and a day or two after he learned that Augustus Penchurch had left the university.

Such was the termination of Claude Tregannon's acquaintance with the Honourable Augustus Penchurch ; no wonder he felt aggrieved when he heard his beautiful and amiable sister Mary was attached to a man he despised, and whose conduct, in every way, was bad and dissolute.

As to Augustus Penchurch, after leaving Oxford, he spent some time in London in the best society, and there he beheld a young lady whose beauty and reputed wealth completely drove away all thoughts of Mary Tregannon. The death of father and brother, in the short space of two years raised him to the peerage, and gave him the possession of a property heavily mortgaged ; he then determined to dissolve his engagement with Mary. Chancing to meet Mr. Curtis Bond in London after his succeeding to the property of Mr. Henry Bond, he said, after congratulating him on his good fortune—

“By the way, cousin mine,” he called him cousin, and it flattered the miser to be called cousin by a lord,

"what became of that nephew of Mr. Bond's—Henry Bond he called himself in college?"

"Confound his impudence," said Mr. Curtis Bond, with a savage grin, "I soon settled his claims to relationship; he was an imposter—a gipsy tinker's child that old Bond picked up and reared, and forsooth must needs give him his own name. Luckily for me," and the miserable miser rubbed his long hands joyfully, "Mr. Bond died without signing his will, thus this pretended nephew was left with only a few hundreds I could not well take from him. However, I turned him out of the house."

"And did he let you do so quietly?" demanded Lord Penchurch, looking with surprise at the scarecrow figure of 'Cousin Mine.'

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the miser—"that's good. Let me—Lord! he was dying of the fever that raged on the coast at the time; they carried him out on a bed to some cottage to die."

Bad, dissolute, and unprincipled as Lord Penchurch was, he could not help casting a look of disgust at the miser. But thus it was he picked up his information respecting our hero, whom he detested already, and when he thus unexpectedly met him walking arm and arm with the maiden he professed to love, and had certainly vowed to make his wife, his rage knew no bounds. He considered it, however, a most excellent opportunity for breaking his engagement with Mary. The following morning, therefore, instead of penning a hostile message to Claude, he sat down and wrote a formal letter to Lady Treacastle, merely stating that after what had witnessed the previous evening, Miss Tregannon was perfectly free from any engagement with him. Two hours afterwards he was on his way to London. Thus ended Mary Tregannon's matrimonial engagement with Lord Penchurch, to the infinite relief and the great contentment of her relations.

Sir Charles Treacastle arrived from Penzance the following morning; he embraced his new-found brother-in-law with real and unaffected good feeling. He adored his wife, and had the most unbounded confidence in her judgment and opinion. In her letter to him the preceding evening, she solemnly declared there was not the smallest doubt remaining in her mind with respect to her brother's

identity; and whether the law would feel satisfied or not with the proofs they could bring forward to support his claims, she would unhesitatingly declare before any judge or jury, that he was her lost brother. She did not enter into any particulars respecting the proofs her brother had obtained, she left them to be judged by Sir Charles on his return. Perfectly satisfied with his wife's judgment, the good-hearted Baronet was fully prepared to acknowledge his brother-in-law, let things turn out as they would. But the moment he beheld him, it required neither arguments or proofs to fully convince him that they had for years harshly, if not cruelly, neglected to inquire into the circumstances of the case, so forcibly represented to them by the kind-hearted and generous Mr. and Mrs. Bond.

"Confound that rascally miser, Curtis Bond," exclaimed Sir Charles, warmly; "if ever I come across him I will let him know my mind with respect to his brutal conduct. However, Julia, we must now endeavour to make up for the past, and for his sake and our own honour, spend money, if it is required, to re-establish him in his rights. He is as noble a looking youth as ever I saw—his presence alone in a court would silence for ever the idea of his being an imposter. The characteristics of his race are stamped in every feature of his face; I shall go to London myself, and will put the case before Sir Christopher Paulet, a very old friend of mine, and the ablest counsel in his Majesty's dominions.

"With respect to that villain, James Tregannon, his person is beyond our reach, and so is that of his rascally attorney, Stonehenge. It's very extraordinary no account of his having ever reached America has been obtained. However, with respect to that fifty thousand pounds raised upon the property, we must promise to pay whatever remains unpaid at this period, that will stop any opposition on their part.

"By-the-bye, I was offered sixty-five thousand pounds yesterday for the two mines on the Pentoven estate, but I hope to get more. I must look over the papers of that estate—I have some recollection about the title-deeds given to your father on his purchasing the property; but I have no distinct remembrance of the deed he executed, conveying the property over to you and yours."

"In truth Charles," said Lady Trecastle, "my memory is defective there—but I dare say you will find all the necessary papers amongst your other documents in the chest room. I know my poor father purchased it as a dower for the eldest daughter, and it is mentioned in the draft of his will, to that effect."

"Well, I will go, my love, this moment and make a search through the Tregannon deeds and papers. I think it only fair that your brother should have some funds to support him while his suit is going on. He shall share the profits of the mines, by Jove, he shall!" continued Sir Charles; "and I tell you what, Julia, you must do—you must contrive some way of getting him to accept three or four thousand pounds till the case is heard. You know nothing in law is done in a hurry, and we must make him appear in the style to which his birth entitles him."

"I will do all I can, Charles," replied Lady Trecastle; "but I know beforehand it will be useless. He has a few hundred pounds, and appears most unostentatious and simple in his habits, though elegant in his taste. He tells us he is devotedly attached to a young, and, as he says a most beautiful girl, and she to him; but, from delicacy, he refrains naming her, because, much as he idolises her,—for their love is the growth of years,—unless the law confirms his right to the name of Tregannon, he will not allow this young lady to lose her station and position in society by uniting herself to a man denied a name by the law. This, you will say, is romantic; but Claude is only twenty, with strong ardent feelings, and the highest notions of honour and probity."

CHAPTER XX.

SEVERAL weeks passed at Trecastle in uninterrupted happiness and tranquillity; Mary, fortunately for her happiness, felt no regret at the breaking off her engagement with Lord Penchurch. All her natural gaiety returned, and her love for her brother became more powerful and engrossing, the more she knew of his disposition and endearing qualities. As to Sir Charles, he was in raptures with him.

They rode over together to Pentoven, examined and went down the mines, and so nicely and delicately did Sir Charles manage the matter, that he flattered himself he had succeeded in getting his brother-in-law to accept half the profits; but Claude, who began to love Sir Charles with all the affection of a brother, easily saw through his good-natured schemes, and silently appeared to acquiesce, and allowed Sir Charles to fancy he was succeeding in his project of partnership.

Claude Tregannon's two nieces and little nephew idolised their uncle—he played with them—romped like a boy with them—and took them out sailing on the lake.

“Oh!” they would exclaim to their mother, “no one makes the boat sail like uncle Claude—she goes twice as fast with him—and we are never afraid if it blows even, as he says, great guns.”

“Only fancy, mamma,” said Ellen. “blowing great guns—I suppose he means it blows the great guns out of the ship.”

“You must ask uncle Claude all about those things,” said Lady Treastle, laughing; he's quite a sailor.”

“He says such funny things, mamma, when he is sailing in the boat. This morning he cried out—“Ah, there's a cat's-paw!” and there I was looking all round wondering how a cat's-paw could float—and then he tells us such funny stories, and manages all the sails himself. Ah, mamma, what shall we do when he goes?”

And Ellen's sweet pretty face became quite sad.

But time rolls on, heedless of joy or sorrow—blessed and happy are those who can enjoy the present without poisoning those moments of joy by plunging into the future.

Claude Tregannon, but that he ardently longed to behold his idolised Fanny, would have considered those weeks passed at Treastle the happiest of his life. Mary sighed, as the moment of his departure drew nigh—the children pouted, and little Harry cried bitterly, and said he would go with uncle Claude and be a sailor. Lady Treastle had become deeply and tenderly attached to him, but began to feel anxious and sad as he prepared to depart; she trembled at the thoughts of a failure in establishing his birth! she knew it would nearly break his heart; she also felt convinced, should such a decision be declared by

the judges appointed to try the case, Claude would quit his country, perhaps for ever, and seek his fortune in other lands.

The proofs he possessed were strong, and his own family backing his claims was a grand feature in his cause; and as to funds, he could have thousands at command. M. Vigors had passed a whole day at Treastle, consulting with Sir Charles, and he was sanguine. "He had," he said, "a host of persons to bring forward, to aid their efforts and assist in evidence." A most careful map of the house and grounds of Tregannon was preparing; for one grand feature of the case was, he was positive he could clearly show, by reference to the map of the grounds, the impossibility of a child of the age of Claude Tregannon, at that time, falling over the range of rocks, that bordered the Fal. It was, as a dozen witnesses could prove, low-water at the time; the bank was over fifteen feet steep, and several feet of mud lay between the rocks and the water at low tide.

"Zounds!" interrupted Sir Charles, "what set of blockheads we all were at the time, not to think of this, and more critically examine the spot!"

"The fact was," observed Mr. Vigors, "no suspicion of wrong entered any one's head; therefore a very superficial examination took place."

"Well," returned Sir Charles, "that shall not be the case now; we will not leave a stone unturned. Now that you are here, my good friend," continued Sir Charles, "I want to speak to you about that Pentoven property. This very morning I hunted over all the deeds in my possession, and I cannot find one relative to Lady Treastle's right to it. I am aware the estate was given up to her by her father, on the day of her marriage, but the mere nominal form he gave her at that period for receiving rents, &c., I find is of no manner of use in disposing of the property, or in selling the mines on it. It's most extraordinary, it never struck me till my brother-in-law's arrival here, that, in reality, we do not possess a single document to prove our right of possession, now that the late Baronet left no will. In the unfinished draught of his will, it is mentioned as a bequest for ever to his daughter, but that's nothing. Do you know, I am rather astounded."

"God bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Vigors, with a look of dismay; "I thought you possessed the title deeds, &c."

"So I do of the estate as it was purchased by the late Baronet."

"Yes, yes, I know that the title to the property is right enough, but it's Lady Trecastle's right we want."

"Why, by all that's just, Sir Charles, if Stonehenge knew this, and I think he must have known it, he would have possessed himself of Pentoven at once, as James Tregannon, being heir at law, became undoubtedly the owner of Pentoven, unless you can show deeds and documents to prove your lady's right and title to it."

Sir Charles Trecastle looked blank.

"But, my good friend, see what a number of years has elapsed, and Stonehenge never made any application concerning the property."

"There may have been reasons for that," said Mr. Vigors, thoughtfully, "it was of comparative small value at that time—about one hundred and fifty pounds a-year; now, for its two mines alone, you can get eighty thousand pounds. By Jove! Sir Charles, this is serious, not, of course, if your brother-in-law comes into the property, and I think there is very little doubt about that, for then he will rectify this strange error. In the mean time, you had better refrain from any negotiations for the disposal of the mines, or anything on the property."

Sir Charles determined to follow Mr. Vigors' advice, still he felt uncomfortable; for Pentoven was a very valuable possession, and he was, at that very moment, preparing to sink other shafts, where most valuable minerals were known to lie.

We must pass over the parting of the lately restored brother from his sisters, but he faithfully promised, whatever was or might be the result of his suit against James Tregannon, not to quit England without returning to Trecastle. Sir Charles was to follow him to London in a week. Passing one day with Mr. Vigors, and another at Tregannon, our hero departed from Cornwall, and on reaching London, took up his abode at a most respectable hotel in Piccadilly, then called the "Cornish Arms."

Anxious, and perhaps a little agitated, he set out the

next day to visit Fanny Fleetwood, at the mansion of her uncle, who resided in — Street; it was a large and handsome house. The servant demanding what name he should say, Claude gave the man a card, on which he had written his name. The domestic, who was an extremely respectable, elderly man, in plain clothes, glanced his eyes at the writing, and then said—

“Beg pardon, sir, will you please to follow me. You are expected, sir.”

Claude followed the man up the wide stairs into a very handsome drawing-room, and there he was left for about five minutes, when the door was hastily opened, and Fanny Fleetwood, with a flushed cheek, and a step a little unsteady, hastily entered the room.

“Oh, Claude,” she exclaimed, as he pressed her to his heart, and kissed her burning cheek, “how glad I am you have arrived! I would have written to you the day before yesterday, to hurry your coming, but madame said you were sure to be on your way. Oh, how glad I am to see you!”

And her fair head drooped upon his shoulder.

Claude saw, at a glance, that something had occurred to vex his companion.

“Ah, Fanny! I fear you have heard something to distress you,” he said, seating her beside him on a sofa, “I know, by your looks, there is something that pains you.”

“Alas! yes, Claude, there is—I am to sail in a week or two for Calcutta.”

The young man scarcely breathed.

Fanny felt the hand that held hers tremble.

“Good God! how is this, Fanny? so unexpectedly; you surely did not think this voyage would take place so soon?”

“Oh, no! I did not dream of it. It was very sudden. The fact is, my dear father has been attacked with a disease which he fears in the end will cause his death.” The tears flowed from Fanny’s eyes as she spoke. “He is not able to bear a voyage to England, and though the doctors say there is no immediate fear of a fatal result, yet he implores me to return directly, that he may see me once more. My uncle is busy in the docks, expediting the fitting out of a first-class ship—his own, in which we are to sail.”

Just then Madame D'Arblay entered the room. She was rejoiced to see our hero, to whom she was greatly attached; she likewise felt this sudden recall to India very much; she knew how terrible the separation would be to the two young lovers.

"But tell me, dear Claude, something about yourself," said Fanny. "Alas! it will be many a day"—and the tears flowed from the eyes of the affectionate girl—"many a day, before I can receive any news from dear England; and leaving you thus, my own Claude, when trouble is before you, and I not near to soothe you, if you are disappointed."

"I will go out in the same ship," said Claude, with a flushed cheek, and with all the enthusiasm of youth. "It is war time. The vessel in which you are to sail must cross the ocean unprotected by ships of war. The period for vessels to sail under convoy is some months off. I saw a paragraph in the papers respecting the sailing of East Indiamen the other day."

Fanny's heart leaped with a joy she could not conceal, but the next moment her features became overcast again.

"Ah, Claude!—and this lawsuit your heart is bent on gaining."

"Only that I may gain you, dearest," said our hero, in a low, serious voice. "I should like to see your father—perhaps he takes a wrong view of his case. Doctors are not infallible. I should like to explain everything clearly to him—fairly and candidly state all."

"Ah, Claude, he knows all already; both my beloved uncle and myself wrote to him on the subject. We expected that he would have alluded to it in his letter, but he did not; the thought of his situation, no doubt, troubled his mind; but, depend upon it, dearest, he will never wish to make his only child miserable."

"I think," observed Madame D'Arblay, "that if Mr. Tregannon could accompany us to India, it would be a step not unnatural, and one your father could not, under the circumstances, disapprove. But for him to abandon or neglect the very important cause in which he is about to embark, would be madness."

"And yet, dear madam, unless Fanny positively rejects

my proposal, I will do so. It will be quite time enough to commence the suit when I return; perhaps they can go on with it during my absence. I should like to go out in some kind of capacity—second or third mate. I have studied navigation, and am tolerably well acquainted with a seaman's duty."

"You a mate of a ship, Claude!" cried Fanny, with a faint smile, and a look of affection at her handsome lover.

"Yes," returned Claude, cheerfully, "and a capital berth it is—mate of a first-class Indiaman."

"It is certainly singular enough," remarked Madame D'Arblay, "that your uncle is just gone to the Docks to meet a young man who applied to him for the berth of third mate on board the Surinam. It is singular also that this noble ship is named after the very vessel we were so near perishing in."

"I will go this very instant to the Docks," exclaimed Claude, starting to his feet, with all the enthusiasm of his age and disposition, "introduce myself to your uncle, and state to him my project,"

Fanny's little heart fluttered with hope. Oh, twenty and sixteen are the ages of hope and romance. How easily then does the heart build up fairy structures—alas! too often to be dashed to the ground by quiet and sober-minded reason. Even Madame D'Arblay did not see anything so extraordinary in Claude's project, so that he actually started off at once for the Docks to see Mr. Fleetwood, intending to return with him to dinner.

At the period of our story, the streets through which it was necessary to pass to gain the Tower and the Docks were in many respects widely different from the same localities at the present day. Sixty or seventy years ago, they were scarcely safe for a stranger to traverse in broad daylight, and certainly most dangerous at night. Blackwall Reach, at this time, had for its landmarks, grim gibbet-posts, on which blanched and blackened the bodies of pirates and robbers, whilst the whole neighbourhood beyond the Tower was a labyrinth of ill-famed streets and dangerous alleys. The Tower Hamlets contained a race of lawless people, who spent their lives in taverns, and bade defiance to the miserable "Charleys" who drawled out the hours of the night.

To avoid the unpleasant traversing through this wilderness of streets, Claude Tregannon took a boat, and proceeded to the dock where the East Indiaman lay.

Passing through the great gates, after dismissing his boat, and having inquired where the "Surinam" lay, he soon came within sight of the noble ship, then almost ready for sea; she was over eighteen hundred tons burden, and looked, in model and rig, like a vessel of war. While he stood gazing with admiration at her, a gentleman descended the broad plank, which served for those on board to reach the quay wall. When half-way down, he suddenly turned to finish some directions he was giving to a person who was leaning over the side of the ship, and being too precipitate in his movements, he lost his balance, tried to recover himself, and fell off the plank into the water beneath; all became confusion and dismay, ropes, and all kinds of things were lowered to his assistance by the few persons in the vessel; but there was no boat near, and the old gentleman's death seemed inevitable, when, seeing his situation, Claude hastily divested himself of his coat, leaped in, and soon reaching him, caught him in by the collar and raised his head from the water; he was quite sensible, though bewildered, for he refrained from grasping his deliverer, but placed his hands on his shoulders; a dozen landing-waiters and others were now hurrying, shouting, and doing nothing, along the quay wall, but Claude in a few strokes reached the steps, and placed the rescued gentleman in safety. He soon gained his legs, and clasping his preserver's hand, exclaimed—

"God bless my soul, what a noble fellow you are! what a ducking we have both had!"

"Mr. Fleetwood! Mr. Fleetwood!" exclaimed a dozen voices, eagerly crowding to help—now that no help was wanting—"let me assist you."

"Thank you, thank you!" exclaimed the old gentleman heartily, and getting rid of some of the water he had unintentionally swallowed, "I have a strong arm here, and do not require other assistance. You are a fine fellow," he continued, as, leaning on our hero's arm, they ascended the long flight of steps. "By St. Dunstan! I never was so near visiting Davy's Locker. Ah! you rascal, come back with that coat," this was addressed to a rather sus-

picious looking individual, who was holding Claude's coat, and edging sideways out of the crowd.

Though he had suspected the gentleman was Mr. Fleetwood, Claude felt pleased to have his surmise confirmed; taking his coat, he and Mr. Fleetwood mounted on board the "Surinam," and got rid of the crowd. There were but half-a-dozen persons in the vessel, the steward, a mulatto, and four care-takers, for none of the crew were to be received till the following day; her cargo was complete, and in a few days more she would be ready for sea.

The moment Mr. Fleetwood got on board, he turned to his preserver, and again shaking him warmly by the hand, said—

"You, most probably have saved my life, my dear young friend; to whom am I indebted for this great service? I fear to look at you—it is a deed I can only repay with thanks and deep gratitude."

Claude smiled, as he replied—

"I do not know that, my dear sir."

"Ah! thank God, I am very glad," said the old gentleman heartily, leading the way into the cabin, all dripping as they were. "Now, steward, brandy at once, and then procure us dry garments of some kind till we get some of our own, and find me a messenger directly. I long to know your name, young gentleman," he continued, appearing not the least the worse for his forced bath.

"Oh! you will find," said our hero helping himself to a glass of brandy, while Mr. Fleetwood with the assistance of the mulatto, who seemed a great favourite, was very actively engaged dragging off his wet garments, "you will find we are old friends, though our acquaintance commenced in rather a hasty manner. I was coming, my dear sir, to seek you—"

"By St. Dunstan!" suddenly exclaimed the vivacious old gentleman, springing up and nearly overturning the mulatto, "I know you;" and catching our hero's two hands, he embraced him with singular cordiality; "you are my little Fan's preserver, I know you are, and now you have saved the uncle. You are a noble fellow! God bless you! you are Henry Bond that was; and will be, please God, Sir Henry Tregannon."

"My dear sir, you have guessed aright, I am that same

individual—but finish changing your garments, for fear of cold.”

“By Jove! I never felt so happy in my life,” exclaimed Mr. Fleetwood; “make haste, Adolphus, and get some dry garments for this gentleman; give me a blanket, best thing in the world. I can’t get into those scarecrows of trousers—God bless my soul! how could you dream of squeezing me into them?”

“Law, massa, what do? no bigger to be had—him tall man, de steward.”

“Yes,” returned Mr. Fleetwood, “so he is—does not weigh nine stone; I am over sixteen—no go there.”

Mr. Fleetwood soon attired himself to his liking in a couple of blankets, while our hero contrived to manage with a suit of the steward’s garments.

The former was, at this period, about sixty, hale, and hearty, about the middle height, somewhat corpulent, with a round head and face, but with an extremely pleasing and good-natured expression.

The time passed in conversation till the return of the messenger with garments for Mr. Fleetwood.—Claude keeping the steward’s till he reached his hotel.

“I am so pleased,” said Mr. Fleetwood as they sat with a bottle of wine before them in the state cabin of the ‘Surinam,’ a fine fire blazing in the splendid stove,—“I am so pleased that you have arrived before Fan’s departure, though, indeed, she felt quite confident you would. I fancy my good brother thinks worse of his case than he ought. He was always nervous, and desponding when ill, and inclined to believe all those confounded doctors say. I never had a doctor in my life, and never was ill, and keep, you see, in excellent condition, while my worthy brother is as thin as a lath.”

“I sincerely hope,” observed his companion, “that your surmise may be correct. Do you know, my dear sir, that it is my intention, unless you see some objection, to accompany your neice and Madame D’Arblay to Calcutta, and see Fanny’s father myself?”

Mr. Fleetwood caught the young man’s hand, saying, with a look of evident pleasure—

“It’s the very thing I should do, were I in your place. By Jove!” and he rubbed his fat hands in great glee, “I

feel lighter in heart at the idea of your going out in this vessel—she sails without a convoy—it won't do to wait. There is a risk, I do not deny it; still she is a remarkably fast craft, carries guns, and will have a crew amounting to one hundred and twenty-six men—in fact, she will be nearly a match for a corvette. There are several passengers—Colonel Denbigh, his wife and family, three fine girls; a Mrs. Salford and family, and others, all anxious to sail, preferring the risk to waiting for the usual convoy.”

“But,” observed Claude Tregannon, looking Mr. Fleetwood seriously in the face, “I do not wish to go out in this vessel as a passenger—I came purposely to request you to let me have the situation of second or third mate if vacant.”

“By St. Dunstan, you shall do no such thing as go out in this ship as mate—I can do better than that. Strange coincidence—do you know who goes out as first mate?”

“Not the least idea.”

“Your old friend, Mr. Seabright, the captain of your lamented uncle's yacht; and all the crew, also, have shipped in the ‘Surinam.’ I suppose I may as well tell you now—for Fan is sure to get the start of me if I do not—I bought the ‘Water Witch.’”

“You, my dear sir!” exclaimed Claude, in a tone of the greatest surprise; “good gracious, for what purpose? pardon me for being so inquisitive.”

“For what purpose!” repeated the merchant, laughing. “Oh! I will tell you. In the first place—she helped to save my little Fan's life, therefore I was determined to have her. Then, I have taken it into my head, that a cruise as far as Gravesend improves my appetite; and, sometimes, I venture all the way to Margate; it gets a little rough to be sure, after passing Southend; but I'm improving—and only that I have shipped my whole yacht's crew on board this ship, before next autumn I should make a first-rate seaman. But with respect to this situation you want, by Jove, you shall command the ‘Surinam.’”

“I command a craft of this size! No, no, that would never do.”

“Ah, I delight in seeing people laugh—I detest long gloomy faces—what's the use of despondency?—it will not remedy a misfortune. Now you do not know how these

kind of things are managed. In the first place, this ship is my individual property—I built her myself—and I'm proud of her—she's a splendid model—she has made a splendid passage home. Unfortunately, Captain Hamilton, her commander, met with an accident in a confounded gig—he had the folly to drive himself, and ran foul of a wagon, was pitched out, and broke his thigh-bone in two places. I am sadly grieved, for he is a most excellent man, and a thorough seaman. Now, my first mate, whom I was thinking of succeeding him for this voyage, is as good a sailor, and as able a navigator as any out of London, and could get a ship to command for the asking; but he likes the ship and he likes me—he has been fifteen years in my service—but, you see," continued the old gentleman, giving a poke to the fire, and arranging his blankets about him, "he's a regular sea bear, as rough as a piece of cast-iron—no more idea of manners than an Esquimaux—and there are some very nice people going out in this ship. Now, it strikes me, you have just come in time; you have studied navigation; you were a sailor from your earliest years; you delight in the sea; all you have to learn is the simple routine of working a large ship. In ten days, with Mr. Burton at your elbow, you will work the ship like a top; he will be delighted to let you have the command for the voyage out and home; and be rejoiced at being spared doing the courtesies of the state-room. Ha, by Jove, here's our messenger come back. Now we will talk all this over in the evening; and Fan shall decide—she settles everything for me;" and, with a sigh, he added—"I have a great mind to go out myself—I shall break my heart after Fan. If you do not bring her back, by Jupiter, I will never forgive you. Do you know every one's in love with her—there's Lord—what's this his name is?—Lord—now I have it—Fenchurch—that's the name!"

Claude Tregannon gave a start from his chair that electrified Mr. Fleetwood, repeating the word—

"Fenchurch! You surely do not mean Lord Augustus Penchurch?"

Ha! ha! that's the name, sure enough!" exclaimed Mr. Fleetwood, finishing his toilet. "I knew it was a church of some sort, with a Pen or Fen before it. Yes, that's the

man—tall, handsome fellow ! but if he had six lordships attached to his name, they would have no more effect upon Fan's little heart than a child's cannon blazing away upon the ' Surinam.' So come along—Fan will tell you everything, and do not be looking as if you were taken aback by a white squall. My glorious Fan will stick to her colours as long as there's a rag left. Come along," and the happy, cheerful old gentleman, put his arm under that of Claude, and both ascended upon deck, our hero in a very thoughtful mood, notwithstanding Mr. Fleetwood's kind and most affectionate manner.

CHAPTER XXI.

AFTER breakfast, the following day to the accident that befel Mr. Fleetwood, Fanny and her lover were seated together, earnestly conversing.

"You have made me so very, very happy, dear Claude," said Fanny, "by letting yourself be over-ruled by my dear, noble-hearted uncle. Ah ! now I have no fear in the world of the voyage. If I was only sure of my beloved father's health being restored, I should be too happy ;" and the soft, loving eyes of the beautiful girl rested on the dark, thoughtful ones of her lover. "Why so thoughtful, Claude?" continued Fanny, letting her soft hand rest on his.

Pressing it fondly, he replied—

"I have many things, dear one, to cause thought. When I see Mr. Burton, perhaps I shall feel less constraint in accepting the command of the ' Surinam.' Now, tell me, as you promised last night, all about this Lord Penchurch ; but first, as you wish it, I will tell you the length and breadth of our acquaintance."

Fanny's cheek grew a little pale as she heard Claude to the end.

"How strange," she said, as he concluded, "are our feelings and presentiments at times ! Now I did not know that you and Lord Penchurch had ever met, and yet I had not been five minutes in his company, when I felt a strange and unaccountable dislike to him come over me ; he is handsome, quite a gentleman in his manners, and, at all events,

whether I considered him to be agreeable or not, he did his best to be so. . But you shall hear how I chanced to meet his lordship.

"My uncle's most esteemed friend, Mr. Arlington, was elected Lord Mayor, and it was at a *fete* given by the Lady Mayoress, that I was introduced to Lord Penchurch. I had no wish whatever to go, but my dear uncle seemed so much to desire it, that I went. I thought no more of his lordship than of any other gentleman, with whom I was in a measure forced to dance, I did not even remember his name, and the occasion that introduced him to me vanished from my memory. Conceive, then, my astonishment, and my uncle's surprise, when he received a most elaborate epistle from his lordship, of which I will not weary you with the recital, but merely state, that he had the singular impudence to request permission to address me, with the intention of offering me his heart and hand. I was indignant, but my good uncle laughed till the tears came into his eyes. Of course, he wrote his lordship a reply, and there ended the affair, upon which I did not bestow a thought till your question last night revived the name of his lordship in my memory—I trust we may never see or hear more of him."

"He had a monstrous amount of assurance," said Claude, with a flush on his cheek; "and so," he added, with a look of affection at the face of his companion, "you refused a lord for the sake of a man—without a name?"

"No, Claude," returned Fanny; "even if my heart had not been yours long years ago, neither title nor wealth should win my hand, if my heart did not go with it. I care for neither name nor rank, if the possessor of those worldly qualifications was deficient of those more sterling qualities—honour, high and pure thoughts, and nobility of soul."

"Your heart, my beloved," said Claude, pressing the hand he held fondly, "is a treasure, to obtain which no sacrifice or trial would be too great."

After some further conversation, interesting alone to lovers, Claude Tregannon rose to proceed to keep his appointment with Mr. Saunders, with whom he expected to meet Mr. Vigors. He had to communicate to them his sudden resolution of proceeding to India in the "*Surinam*," and he felt that he should have some difficulty in persuad-

ing those gentlemen that, in following the dictates of his heart, he was not inflicting a deep blow upon his future prospects of succeeding to the title and estates of Tregannon. The ship, Mr. Fleetwood said, could not possibly sail before eight or ten days. In that time Sir Charles Trecastle would be in London; from him he also expected some obstruction to his design; and yet he was fully resolved to carry out his resolution, not to let his beloved Fanny cross the seas—perhaps swarming with French cruizers and vessels of war—without his presence to cheer, and his arm to protect her. But he was most agreeably surprised to find that his two friendly advisers offered but very little opposition to his project, though rather astonished at his suddenly formed determination.

“It will take some months,” said Mr. Saunders, “to prepare and put together facts and circumstances, and also examine and take down the depositions of the witnesses we shall require, and before the case comes to a decisive hearing, you will be back.”

Mr. Saunders was much astonished and interested in the recent discoveries made in the cave.

“There is scarcely a doubt about our success now,” said the lawyer; “these events throw quite a new light upon the case; besides, the appearance of your sisters, and Sir Charles Trecastle, attesting their firm belief in your birth, will have a powerful effect. The remark in the almanack you found in the cave is a remarkable feature. It proves that another child existed of the same age with yourself, and that he was drowned in the Fal. That James Tregannon entered the mansion of your lamented father, that fatal night also may be strongly surmised, and be believed; but these proofs are only presumptive, and though in my own mind I feel satisfied that he had some act or part in your poor father’s death, yet we cannot attempt any such accusation. As to securing the person of that villain, Black George, as you style him, I do not see that it would benefit us, from what you tell me of the rascal’s character. I think he would consider hanging rather an amusement, provided he could die in telling a lie, which would, or might, involve us in greater difficulties; for instance, were he to swear you were his son, and show proof that you were born at such and such a time corresponding with your

age, it would be difficult to defeat his villany, for though the remarks in that almanack may really be supposed to be written by him, nobody we know could swear to that fact; and the rascal is not a man to be frightened into anything. The first thing now is to put all things as my young friend would say, into 'ship shape.' Therefore we will let matters rest till Sir Charles Treacastle's arrival. I should not be at all surprised if an attack was made upon the Pentoven estate by the creditors of James Tregannon; Sir Charles's letter about that astonished me. I cannot imagine how Stonehenge let him keep possession, knowing that he had no legal title to it; it's very strange! That circumstance will come out now."

"I am sorry for that," said Claude Tregannon, with a very thoughtful look. "If I fail myself, I shall be the cause of stripping my kind-hearted brother-in-law of a fine and valuable property."

"We must not think or dream of failure, my dear friend," observed Mr. Saunders. "Ah! when I think of your lamented uncle, and my dear old, kind-hearted friend Parks, how they were both cut off, and without signing their wills—it makes me sick of all procrastination, which may well be said to be the 'thief of time.' Do you know that that miserly wretch, Curtis Bond, is now in the receipt of nearly eleven thousand a-year, and positively does not spend one hundred pounds? They say he has constituted young Lord Penchurch his heir. Ha! ha! the gossip is that his Lordship, who is rather embarrassed for cash, went to Curtis Bond, and tried to coax him to pay off the mortgages on the Penchurch estate. To this, his worthy relative agreed on certain conditions. On his lordship's applying to Mr. Bond's solicitor to know the conditions, he was thunder-struck on hearing that the miser required the control of the whole property for a term of years, and that his intended heir should learn economy, for which purpose he was to live with him for the five years, during which period Mr. Curtis Bond proposed to allow him the liberal sum of one hundred pounds a-year for private expenses; this he considered absolutely necessary that his lordship should do, if he consented to make him his heir. By Jove! I heard Lord Penchurch was furious, and cursed his worthy relation most heartily."

"Curtis Bond has the power to will the Grange property to whom he pleases—has he not?" questioned Mr. Vigors.

"Yes," returned Mr. Saunders, "such is the case: the entail ends with him."

After several hours passed in conversation relative to his suit, Claude left the lawyers still busy, and returned to his hotel to meet Mr. Burton, and his old friend, Mr. Seabright, who was to sail in the "Surinam," as first mate. It is not necessary to relate what passed during the interview, sufficient to say that Mr. Burton left, highly delighted with his future commander, and with a high opinion of his qualities as a seaman, from a long conversation he had had with Mr. Seabright, before Claude's arrival. Our hero himself felt more satisfied, because he clearly perceived that the old, good-natured, but somewhat rough sailor, felt no manner of pique at his taking the command, for the voyage out and home.

The next day he set out in Mr. Fleetwood's handsome but plain chariot, with Fanny and Madame D'Arblay to visit Westminster Abbey, neither having ever entered its ancient walls.

It was not without a feeling of strange and solemn awe, that the young lovers entered within the precincts of the Cathedral. They felt they were in the presence of the mighty dead; the very sound of their footsteps seemed to startle the slumbering echoes that before appeared to be mute as the surrounding tombs. It struck them that the very pavement they trod on was covered over with mitres and croziers, helmets and swords, sceptres and crowns.

The shadows cast by the lofty pillars, over aisle and choir, how often had they been crossed by monarchs and statesmen! How many christenings, coronations, and funerals of departed monarchs had passed and repassed over those deep sombre shadows! Darkness and light, winter and summer have brightened and deepened over those shadowy crypts under which their ashes repose.

Thus thinking and conversing our party passed on, not remarking that they were keenly observed by a party of three gentlemen and several ladies; the latter, however, shortly after left the place, whilst the gentlemen, having handed the ladies into a carriage, returned into the building. In the mean time our friends continued their ramble, enjoying a great and intellectual treat.

They were particularly struck with the massive, majestic, and solid Saxon architecture of the building called the Pix office; before the sound of the Norman trumpet startled the Saxons from their peaceful dreams, this venerable pile stood as it now stands, a monument worthy of Alfred the Great's descendant. The exquisite beauty of the Mosaic pavement lying before the altar in the choir, and which old Abbott Ware brought from Rome, some time in the reign of the Third Henry, attracted their attention. Thus from one splendid object to another, they rambled on till they considered it time to return. In passing out through the portal, Claude Tregannon thought he felt Fanny's arm tremble on his, and heard a slight exclamation pass her lips. He looked round, for he caught the sound of voices, and then his gaze rested upon the three gentlemen advancing round an angle of the building; they talked and laughed loudly, fixing their eyes upon Claude Tregannon and his party, with a very insolent stare. Our hero at once recognised in one of them, Lord Penchurch, who was leaning on the arm of a tall, strong man, elaborately dressed in the fashion of the day, with immense whiskers of jet black, and huge eyebrows of the same colour.

"Oh, yes," said Lord Penchurch, as if in reply, in a loud, sneering tone, "she's well enough, but shows d——d bad taste to take up with a fellow without a name, a gipsy's bantling, by all accounts."

Claude felt the blood in his veins rush to his head, at the same time, Fanny's arm clung to him with all the power in her frame, while she said, in a voice that trembled with emotion—

"Claude, Claude, my own Claude, for God's sake, see me to the carriage, I am, I fear, fainting; and oh, if you love me, do not leave me—do not leave me!"

He looked at her and saw that besides Fanny's deep distress and alarm, Madame D'Arblay was greatly shocked. Pressing Fanny's arm to his side he walked on towards the gate, where the chariot waited for them. A loud laugh broke from the lips of Lord Penchurch's companions, as they rapidly approached, and just as Madame D'Arblay sprang in, and assisted Fanny, Lord Penchurch and the tall, whiskered man stepped up, his lordship saying aloud—

"Not a bad foot and ankle neither, for a city miss."

Claude turned, and with a blow that would almost have felled an ox, levelled the speaker to the earth, where he lay without sense or motion. The next instant the hand of the tall man was on Claude's collar saying—

“Now, by ——, you shall pay for this insult!”

But this ruffian, for we can call him by no other name, reckoned too much upon his bulk and power, for no sooner was his hand upon our hero's collar, than he was violently hurled back, staggering, and with difficulty kept himself from falling. The footman and coachman, at first, were so astounded, that they remained as if petrified; but our hero, throwing a card that had his name and address on it to the third person, who stood, a little bewildered, bending over Lord Penchurch, who was bleeding profusely from his nostrils and mouth, stepped into the carriage, and told the coachman to drive home. Fanny was fainting in the arms of Madame D'Arblay. A loud cheer from about twenty or thirty persons who had gathered, like magic, round the spot, showed how John Bull appreciated the conduct of the party, whose words and actions they had, some of them, witnessed.

Now it was a very clear case, that, early as the day was, not yet three o'clock, Lord Penchurch and his two companions had been lunching, and drinking very freely of champagne. His lordship was carried into a private room of a coffee-house close at hand, one of his companions calling for a bottle of wine, and a basin of water and vinegar; with the latter, Lord Penchurch's face was washed, and then it was that his friends saw that he was minus his two front teeth, his upper lip nearly separated, and the lower part of his face desperately swollen.

“You must shoot that rascal dead, by ——,” exclaimed the tall man, to his lordship, who, with a terribly gloomy brow was bathing his face with vinegar.

“It is easy to talk, Colonel,” returned Lord Penchurch bitterly: “curse him! I cannot fight a man without a name.”

“Oh! confound him, we'll give him a name,” cried the Colonel. “If you miss him, and I am sure, dead shot as you are, that will not happen, leave him to me. I will kill him the first shot—eh, Hartwood, what do you say—”

“Well,” replied the person addressed as Hartwood,

who was looking very serious. He was the third son of Lord Hartwood, and in years not more than three and twenty, and, as far as looks went, a remarkably gentlemanly young man, and, strange to say, though in such very bad company, neither a vicious nor ill-intentioned man, has will hereafter appear.

"Well, Colonel Thornback, I think this has turned out a very unpleasant and rather a disgraceful kind of business. I think, gentlemen, you have, perhaps unintentionally, misled me into this affair."

"What the devil do you mean, Hartwood?" exclaimed the Colonel, almost fiercely.

"Come, Colonel, I do not intend you to try your skill in shooting upon me; at all events, if you want to quarrel, let us settle our little outstanding accounts first, for as you are so dead a shot, I should be booked at once, and I do not like leaving small bills unpaid."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the Colonel, with a changed expression of countenance, "you are always witty, Hartwood; but, joking apart, why do you seem vexed about this affair, a mere joke with a city damsel, and an upstart rascal, who wants to thrust himself into society under a false name?"

"Well, I do not feel satisfied," returned the Honourable Mr. Hartwood, "when I beheld the lady, I repented going on this lark, as you called it; she is remarkably beautiful, and so far from being a brazen-faced coquette, she appeared to me to be modesty personified; and as to this upstart without a name, he is one of the handsomest looking young fellows I ever beheld. You mentioned he was an imposter, forcing himself on the world as a nephew of some relation of Lord Penchurch's, and that he was assuming the name of Bond; now look here, here is his card, Henry Claude Tregannon!"

"Tut, Hartwood, how easily you are deceived by appearances!—that's another dodge of this fellow. How do you feel now, Augustus?" Continued the Colonel turning to Lord Penchurch, "the swelling is going down, eh."

"Feel!" passionately exclaimed the young noble, rising and swallowing a glass of wine, "I feel I could cut the villain's throat, if I had an opportunity; he has disfigured me for life."

"Pooh," returned the Colonel, "not a bit of it; Monsieur Blancmange will put in two new teeth, that no one will know; and as to the cut in the lip; a couple of days will take that mark away."

"No," fiercely returned his lordship, "nor a couple of years—look, Colonel," and he said in a low voice, in that worthy's ear—"you must manage it—I'll meet him. Mind I have the first shot—mind that."

"Let me alone," said the Colonel, coolly finishing the bottle of wine, "I will ensure you that; and if he escapes, he will have to stand a shot from me, and no one that ever did came off scatheless"

"Well, Lord Penchurch," said the Honourable Mr. Hartwood, "you will excuse my having anything more to do in this affair. Sir Henry Claude Tregannon—I mean the late Baronet of that name—was my father's college chum, and during his life a firm friendship existed between them; now I have heard my father say, that the death of the Baronet and the loss of his infant son, was a most strange and mysterious affair; this young man whose name is on the card, presumes, by his taking the name, that he is the late Baronet's son—so at least I judge by the three names, whether he is or is not, it is not for me to say—but so bare-faced an imposture as the assumption of such a name would be, appears incredible, and—"

"You are cursedly eloquent to-day, Hartwood," interrupted Lord Penchurch, impatiently, "I do not want to drag you into my quarrels, so say no more about it; I think I am sufferer enough as it is—"

"You must confess the provocation was very great," returned the young man, taking up his hat. "I am sorry you are so much hurt, but recollect I strongly urged you not to approach the carriage and pursue your sport further, for I saw the young man's eye kindle with a terrible fire, and I drew back."

"It was the safest way, certainly," returned Lord Penchurch, with a sneer, and ringing the bell.

"Come, come, my Lord," returned young Hartwood, with a flush on his cheek; "you have quite enough on your hands without needlessly insulting me."

"Oh!" interrupted the Colonel, taking young Hartwood by the hand, "do not let a rascally impostor break

up our friendship; his lordship means nothing. So shake hands; confound it—a nearly broken jaw is bad enough, without the loss of a pleasant friend.”

The young men shook hands, and a few minutes after left the coffee-house in a glass-coach, his lordship with his handkerchief bound across his swollen face.

CHAPTER XXII.

WHEN Claude Tregannon sprang into the chariot and beheld Fanny Fleetwood insensible in the arms of Madame D'Arblay, he bitterly bewailed his impetuosity, and blamed himself for heeding the words uttered by such a man as Lord Penchurch.

“Do not be alarmed,” said Madame, “she will recover in a few moments. You are blaming and fretting yourself needlessly. As a man, you could not have acted otherwise—the coward, to thus insult a young and innocent girl!”

Claude knelt, with a hand of Fanny's in his, gazing intently into her pale features; Madame held a powerful essence to her nostrils, while the carriage rolled on as rapidly as possible through the crowded streets. Fanny speedily recovered, and the first object her eyes rested on was her lover's anxious face; tears came into her eyes, and throwing her arm round his neck, she leant her head on his shoulder, saying, in a low, fond voice—

“My own Claude, what a trial you had to bear!”

“My sweet love,” returned Claude, “I felt only for you; the sting of that coward's words would otherwise have penetrated only skin deep.”

“Ah!” sighed Fanny, “I wish in my heart we were on the broad Atlantic. I fear me this is only the beginning; that terrible blow will rankle in his lordship's bad heart; he will seek what he will call satisfaction. Oh! how I abhor the thought of—” She could not finish the sentence, but, turning to her affectionate friend, Madame D'Arblay, said—“Oh! Ernestine, is there no way—no honourable way—for dear Claude to avoid the terrible consequences of this fatal rencontre to-day.”

"Dear Fanny," observed the young man, soothingly, "you are conjuring up fancies, and picturing to yourself consequences, that will not, I feel almost sure, follow on this affair. I know his lordship of old; he will rest satisfied with the insult he intended to perpetrate, and the punishment he received. What could have induced him to depart from his usual caution? I cannot imagine; for his custom is to keep at a distance, and launch his venom when out of the reach of the object of his hate or suspicion. I fancy he must have been excited either by wine or the instigation of that bully on whose arm he was leaning."

"Fanny shook her head with an air of doubt, and just then the carriage stopped at her uncle's door.

"You are looking so pale, my love," said Madame D'Arblay, "that your uncle will imagine something unpleasant has occurred, and I think, if possible, it would be better not to let him hear of this affair."

"Oh!" replied the poor girl, with a look at the face of her lover, "before he returns home my paleness will have vanished. Would to God that was all! Ah! Claude, I dare not ask you to do that which, though I know in my heart it is contrary to the laws of God, yet is, alas! rendered a necessity by a false code of honour. That man will require you to meet him—I know it—I feel it—and you will go. Oh! Claude, Claude, if anything happens to you, it will kill me," she concluded as she was ascending the stairs to the drawing-room, leaning on his arm, looking up beseechingly into his features. There was a fierce struggle in Claude's heart, as he listened to her soft, loving voice.

Gentle reader, we are speaking of a period, though only sixty or seventy years ago, many yet live who existed at that time—a period when the duel between man and man was of daily occurrence—alas! often for the most trivial causes. To receive an insult, and not meet your insulter, and take his life if you could—or let him take yours—would be to get yourself shunned, and, in fact, thrust out from all society. To kill your antagonist before breakfast, and eat a hearty one after, was quite a commonplace affair—and very little trouble or inconvenience followed such an event. Thank God such is far from the case at present. If duelling is not totally abandoned in the United Kingdom, it is of very rare occurrence.

We have said there was a very fierce struggle in the heart of Claude, as Fanny's words fell upon his ear, though he strove to make it appear as if he should hear no more of the affair.

"Listen, dear one," he said, leading her to a sofa, and seating himself beside her; "I will promise you this—if I have to meet this man—nay, do not shudder—where is all the spirit I know you possess?"

"Ah, Claude," she interrupted, with a sigh, "spirit! it all vanishes when your life is in danger. I have grown up from early girlhood, looking up to you, my preserver from a miserable death, with a feeling of love and devotion that has become a part of my being. I have never felt fear or timidity in telling you, or showing you, my love, every thought, every wish of my heart; and yet, if I thought my love was bestowed upon one unworthy of it, and whose thoughts and feelings were not as pure and holy as my own—oh, Claude, I could not cease to love—but I could die."

With a passionate feeling of intense love and devotion Claude pressed her to his heart, kissed her pale cheek, and said—

"Fanny, dearly beloved girl, I can become a coward if becoming so would relieve that gentle heart of one moment of pain or sorrow. I will refuse to meet that man should I be required to do so."

"No, no, no," hastily interrupted Fanny, "that must not be—your honour, your fame, is as dear to me as to yourself—I have no power to advise. Were you to do that which you now propose to do, the thought of having yielded to my weakness would poison every hour of your existence. I was foolish to allow my feelings and love to cause me to utter the words I did. We live in an artificial world; and we must, I suppose, in some cases, give way to its view of things; the day is not yet come, when many of its bad customs and usages will vanish, leaving another generation to wonder how they ever existed."

Much and long they conversed together; and when they separated, each felt more easy in mind and feelings. The next day, suspecting he should receive a hostile message from Lord Penchurch, our hero called at the mansion of an old college friend, the same who had urged him to volunteer into the navy, and was not only agreeably surprised to find

that he was in town, but also at that moment in the house. It is unnecessary to relate the conversation that passed between them at full length, but, at the conclusion, Frederic Delaware said—

But now, Claude, I must put you on your guard; be very careful what you say or do in the presence of that fellow who goes by the name of Colonel Thornback—he is a most dangerous rascal. I am not quite certain, but I think he is an Englishman, though his title of colonel is of American or foreign origin—he is a notorious bully, and is everlastingly exhibiting his shooting qualities in our galleries and elsewhere—he is also a disgraceful black leg; how that really good-natured young fellow Hartwood came into such company I know not—but I know he is fond of play—and, I suppose, from his intimacy with Lord Penchurch, who, it is notoriously known, is frightfully in debt, he became acquainted with this squash buckler, Colonel Thornback, whose means of existence no one knows—and yet, strange to say, he has the command of gold in tolerable abundance, and gets into a society you would scarcely think to find him in. This fellow will make Lord Penchurch challenge you, and will himself call on you, I have no doubt, to know who is your friend for the occasion. He knows me well enough; and I have reason to think that knowledge will almost make him civil; some other time I will explain to you why. You are new to town—I am now an old stager and the large fortune left me by my worthy uncle has converted the third son of a not very wealthy peer into somebody, and, perhaps, has prevented my being useful to my country,” he added with a smile, “for my father will not listen to my going out to have a brush with the French, but wants me to stand for the borough of W——, and astonish the world by a maiden speech in Parliament. Now go back to your hotel, and see if that fellow has called, and mind be punctual to dinner at seven o’clock—we shall have it all to ourselves—all out of town but myself—and I want a long chat with you.”

On returning to his hotel, our hero found a card upon the table, with Colonel Thornback’s name—and, in pencil, underneath, was written—“call again at five o’clock.”

Tossing the card from him, he sat down and commenced a long letter to his sister Mary. He had scarcely concluded,

when one of the waiters announced Colonel Thornback; and immediately that worthy gentleman entered the room. With a perfectly easy and self-satisfied air, Claude Tregannon laid down his pen, and looked the Colonel calmly in the face; but without rising from his chair, said, quite quietly, pointing to a seat—

“Your errand, sir, I can imagine; these matters are better talked over with a friend. There is the gentleman’s name with whom, I trust, you may settle matters to your mutual satisfaction.”

“Pray, sir,” returned the Colonel, halting and facing our hero, with his dark visage inflamed with passion—
“pray, sir, who the devil do you take me for?”

“Without referring to his Satanic Majesty,” returned our hero, in his calm, commanding manner and tone, “I shall be able to answer your question, when we have settled the business that brings you here. The Honourable Frederick Delaware will answer all other interrogatories and settle particulars—the less, therefore, we say on the subject the better.”

On hearing the name of Delaware, Colonel Thornback started, and fell back a pace or two, repeating the name with considerable surprise and evident vexation.

“Do you mean Lord Torwood’s youngest son?” he asked.

Claude Tregannon merely replied—

“The same, sir.”

“Well,” continued the Colonel, after a moment’s thought, and again looking savage, “that gentleman is, at all events, a gentleman by name and station, and Lord Penchurch will be pleased to find that he has somebody of name and station to keep him in countenance in this preposterous affair, when his lordship condescends to meet a——”

“Take care, sir,” exclaimed Claude, with the angry flush of his race coming into his cheek. “Take care, sir, if you go any further I shall feel necessitated to show you a shorter way of descending the stairs than you perhaps would like.”

“By Heaven, this is past endurance!” almost roared the Colonel, grasping fiercely the heavy cane he carried; “what do you take me for, that you dare so grossly insult me,—

"I take you," returned Claude, rising from his chair, and raising his powerful and commanding stature to its full height, "I take you for rather a heavy, bulky man; do not request my opinion further, till you have settled your worthy friend Lord Penchurch's business. You may then learn what my opinion of you is."

Almost speechless with rage, Colonel Thornback gazed upon our hero, scanning the noble proportions of his athletic figure, and acknowledging, in his own mind, that if he intended flinging him down stairs, he could, and would assuredly do so. Mastering his passion, he said, taking up his hat—

"You will remember this, you will by G—. If you are alive in forty-eight hours, I'll shoot you as sure ——"

"Pooh!" interrupted Claude, with a contemptuous smile. "Leave me, I shall doubtless have quite enough of you before this business ends." And turning round, he sat down and resumed his writing.

Colonel Thornback trembled with rage, his features worked convulsively, but he uttered not a word; passing out through the door, and slamming it after him with such violence that the room and things in it vibrated for several moments.

After leaving the hotel, he proceeded, at a quick pace, along Piccadilly, and down St. James's Street; and entering a well-known club house, traversed a long corridor, and opening the door of a private room, he entered, and shut himself in. There was only one gentleman present, who was seated at a table, writing a letter—that gentleman was Lord Penchurch. His lordship looked up, and seeing the flushed, angry features of the Colonel, who threw himself into a chair, after pulling the bell violently, said, in a tone of some curiosity—

"What's the matter now, Colonel; have you seen that fellow?"

A domestic entering the room, prevented the Colonel replying.

"Bring a bottle of sherry, James, and glasses, said the Colonel, and just look into the saloon and see if Captain Brooks is there."

"He is, Colonel," said the man, "for I just took him and Mr. Baldwin a couple of bottles of champagne."

"Ah! I am glad of that, he will not leave in a hurry, then, so get us the sherry, and add to it a bottle of champagne."

"Why, what the deuce is the matter with you, Thornback?" cried Lord Penchurch, "your throat seems as parched and dry as a prompter's after a five-act piece."

"For that reason," returned the Colonel, "I require wine to clear it; but I tell you what, my good lord," he continued, getting excited, "if you do not shoot that proud puppy, he will assuredly kill you."

Lord Penchurch turned pale, and looking into the face of the angry Colonel, rather startled, observed—

"Why, you know that must depend on your getting me the first shot." And then, with a little hesitation, he added, "I will not go out else, for when a man of my rank consents to ——"

"Pshaw!" fiercely interrupted the Colonel, swallowing down a large glass of sherry, just left on the table by the attendant. "You know well, he is no upstart, or pretender, and you know, also, that I have the means of proving he is what he asserts himself to be."

"Well, so you told me this morning, but how you obtained that knowledge in so short a period, you did not think fit to tell me. I was writing to Captain Brooks when you came in. That was a cursed business last night. You played with miserable luck. Brooks holds my note for seven thousand pounds, and on my soul I do not know where to raise the money; I have mortgaged every acre I had unencumbered."

"Well! you know I am a sufferer as well as yourself," replied the Colonel, impatiently. "Your unlucky bungling left me in debt to young Hartwood three thousand pounds, instead of his owing me that sum. You hurried me, and in the confusion I took the wrong dice, and now the young gentleman pretends to have grown scrupulous, and refuses to play; but I will speak to Brooks myself, and get you time."

"Let us first get rid of this cursed affair with Claude Tregannon. I cannot be your second—you must get another."

"How is this?" angrily exclaimed Lord Penchurch, a little agitated; "what has changed your purpose? I will

move no further in the affair if this is the way I am left. What reason can you have for refusing?"

"The best of all possible reasons," observed the Colonel, "I intend shooting him myself, and thus save you the trouble."

"How can you do that?" demanded Lord Penchurch, eagerly.

"You must get a fall from your horse to-morrow, and take to your bed for a few days; and before your lordship is recovered, your friend Tregannon will be buried—will that suit you?"

Lord Penchurch thought for a few moments, and then asked—

"Will he meet you?"

The Colonel uttered a fierce oath, striking the table forcibly at the same time.

"What put that idea into your head, my Lord?"

"Why, I judge by the mode in which he treated you. I doubt him—he's as proud as Lucifer—fears nothing. No, he will not meet you—a professed duelist."

"Then I will cane him in the public streets," exclaimed the Colonel, with an oath.

"He will break every bone in your body if you attempt that," retorted Lord Penchurch. "I never saw any one that could match him in strength and extraordinary activity. No, no, let me meet him, and assure me the first shot, he will never require another."

The Colonel thought for a moment, and then observed—

"Perhaps you are right; but do you know who is to be his second?"

"I never bestowed a thought on that subject," answered his lordship; "some city apprentice, I suppose."

"Now, you do not suppose any such thing," returned the Colonel, nearly finishing the bottle of sherry. "What's the use of such cursed nonsense with me; no, his second is Lord Torwood's youngest son. You know him well."

"Ah! indeed," exclaimed his lordship, with a start, "I do know him; he was his bosom friend at Oxford; and so he has induced him to become his second; I understand now your objection to becoming my friend on the occasion; his getting possession of those false dice was certainly

awkward. It gives him a kind of control over you, should he wish to take advantage of his discovery."

"Well, now that you understand the thing," replied the Colonel, "you know what to do. I shall send Captain Brooks to him, and demand satisfaction for his confounded insolence this day. He treated me worse than a dog; curse his cool impudence—who could have told him anything about me?"

"Lord Torwood's son, of course," answered Lord Penchurch; "so your sending Captain Brooks to him will be quite useless."

Colonel Thornback remained buried in thought several minutes, and then rousing himself, said,—

"Well, since things are come to this pass, I will make a bold move in your favour; I will go to-morrow morning, and call myself on young Delaware. I will see what use he intends to make of his unfortunate discovery—it may not be as bad as I suspect; at all events, as your friend, he must, I think, meet the affair in a proper way, and sink that of the false dice. With respect to getting you the first shot, that will be decided by a toss up, and you are aware you cannot fail to win the toss; the shorter your distance, therefore, the better."

Lord Penchurch, notwithstanding his friend's settling the affair so comfortably, did not exactly feel at ease. He was a coward at heart, and a splendid shot when firing at a mark; there is a wide difference between shooting at a target and facing a cool and resolute antagonist, and as good a marksman as yourself.

"I shall go and speak with Brooks about the seven thousand pounds," said the Colonel, rising, having finished nearly all the wine himself. "You dine at the club, I do not. I have something on hand this evening, so shall not see you till after I have arranged everything with young Delaware."

About the hour of ten on the same night, the Colonel, closely enveloped in a large brown mantle, with a handkerchief over the lower part of face, and a remarkably shabby hat on his head, was threading his way through a then famous part of St. Giles's called the "Rookery." Sixty years back it was a fearful place, a kind of hell upon earth; but the Colonel pursued his way till he came to one of the

tallest houses in the Rookery. This house was tenanted by a terrible tribe of human beings, men and women who defied the law, and who lived by plunder. The Colonel entered without hesitation, and proceeded up the rather filthy and slippery staircase, almost in total darkness. With a smothered curse he came against two or three persons descending the stairs, who cursed him heartily and loudly in return; still on he went, till he reached a door on the fourth story, against which he gave a peculiar knock; the next moment a heavy bolt was drawn back, and the door opened by a tall powerful man who stood at the entrance, holding a candle stuck in the neck of a bottle.

"Ah!" said the inmate of the room, "it's you — come in."

The Colonel obeyed the order, the man closed and bolted the door, and placed the light on the table, on which was a large bottle of gin, a jug of hot water, a broken basin, containing sugar, and two glass tumblers. The walls of the room were filthy, and covered all over with strange hieroglyphics in charcoal, whilst the boards of the floor were quite indistinguishable from dirt; yet there was burning a good sea-coal fire in the grate, and this alone gave an appearance of comfort to the otherwise miserable chamber.

The occupier of the apartment, we have said, was a tall, powerful man, much more so than the Colonel, who, though younger than his companion by ten years, was heavy and bulky. He was habited in the garb of a cattle drover, his face carefully divested of beard and whisker, his dark hair cropped close, and lying on the table was a sandy-coloured wig.

"Well; I expected you would come to-night," he observed, "so I have made up a good fire for you; for I know you can't do without luxuries, William."

"Curse me, George," answered the Colonel, with a laugh, as he threw aside hat and mantle, and looked round the room with considerable disgust, "your luxuries are luxuries with a vengeance; the smell of this entire region is detestable."

"Ah, you were always too nice, William," said the other, whom it is quite needless to describe, as, no doubt, our readers have recognised their former acquaintance

Black George, that worthy and Colonel Thornback being brothers.

A very short sketch of their birth and early history is somewhat necessary. It shall, however, be brief.

Their father was a Captain Thornback, of good family, but reduced circumstances. He originally entered the army as a volunteer—was brave to excess—the only good quality, unfortunately, he possessed. After a couple of years' service, having performed some valiant exploit, and having had the education of a gentleman, he received an ensign's commission—led a forlorn hope, and escaped—again volunteered to lead another, and escaped again with a severe wound, and was made lieutenant—finally, he rose to the rank of Captain; but his irregular conduct, and strong partiality for drink and play got him into disgrace, and finally he retired from the service on half-pay, returned to London, and married a woman of indifferent reputation, who brought him, in the course of eleven years, two sons: the eldest George Thornback, the youngest William. What with drinking and keeping bad company, Captain Thornback became reduced to a very low state. His wife died about two years after the birth of her youngest son. George the eldest, received a tolerable education at a day-school as long as his father's funds sufficed to pay for it; afterwards he grew up, fearfully neglected, keeping company with the most vicious children in the vicinity of Whitechapel, where his father, on account of its cheapness, resided—George was extremely fond of his little brother William. At the age of eighteen, George left his home, refusing to take to any trade, joined a set of bad men, and wandered into the provinces.

We need say no more with respect to him, as his career is sufficiently known to the reader. Captain Thornback, all of a sudden took it into his head to emigrate to America, and to America he went; and, in New York, at the expiration of seven years, enduring much from poverty, he died. William Thornback was at this period just two and twenty—his career is briefly told—with a tolerably handsome person and great assurance, he pushed his way into the society of New York with tolerable success; he could drink hard, handle a pistol or a knife as well as any Kentucky

man in the province; but his ingenuity with dice, cards, and other things, brought him sometimes into scrapes. He left New York, travelled through the United States, improving his hand in all bad acts, associated with all kinds of infamous characters, till at last even America became too confined for his abilities to show themselves in; and, finding the climate too hot for him, after pocketing a sum of two thousand pounds as his share from a gang of swindlers, he embarked for France, with the title of Colonel affixed to his name, and went through various adventures there, and finally he arrived in London, and, by degrees, pushed his way into society—not so difficult a task seventy years ago as at present.

The swagger and military bully still existed, and Colonel Thornback, with his easy impudence, and seeming command of money—for, at first, he played in secret, in the numerous low houses where play was tolerated, till a service he chanced to perform for a young nobleman of rank, but remarkably indifferent morals, got him two or three steps up the ladder, and an introduction to some of the clubs. Thus he continued to live, preying on the unwary, sometimes taking on himself a quarrel for a young man of fortune, not inclined to risk his life, though he risked his reputation hourly—winning large sums by false dice and dishonest practices.

He was first detected using false dice by the Honourable Frederic Delaware; but, though wild and giddy, at times, and led, from a love of frolic, into places he ought to have shunned, young Delaware was a highly honourable young man, and the very discovery he had made of Colonel Thornback's swindling, induced him to make a resolution never to frequent such places again. Being resolute and determined, he called the Colonel into a private room.

"Now, sir, listen to me," he said; "I saw you, an hour ago, change your dice. Nay, sir, your blustering with me is quite useless—for certain reasons, I will not expose you this time, or unmask you—but, mark me, wherever I meet you, if amongst gentlemen, take care how you use swindlers' tools, or I will unmask you. Do not mention my name, or that you met me here—keep my secret—I will keep yours, till I see you repeat your trick, or detect you in any act of swindling."

The young man left the false Colonel, who though he cursed his young adviser, took the lesson he had received in silence.

The Colonel had often wondered what had become of his brother George, but he could gain no intelligence whatever of him. Meanwhile Black George, having made his way to London, after his adventure in the cave with our hero, in the disguise of a cattle drover, having hired himself to an Essex farmer to drive a herd of cattle to London, so disguised himself, that he made the journey to the metropolis without the slightest risk of being recognised, and took up his abode in a place he was well acquainted with, the rookery of St. Giles's; by a mere chance, he heard his brother's name mentioned by one of his old comrades, a frequenter of low gaming houses—

"Colonel Thornback," repeated Black George to himself, "that must be my brother William."

His comrade told him where he might see him on a certain night of the week; he went, and they mutually recognised each other.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE two brothers were by no means scrupulous in communicating to each other the numerous particulars of their varied and disgraceful career.

"And so, George," observed the Colonel, "here you are, after so many years, no richer than when you began life; however, that is not your fault, that unfortunate affair of the shipwreck, though it took from you a very useless appendage, I mean your wife, nevertheless, stripped you of all your cash. But tell me, could you contrive to get a quart of brandy any where in this detestable neighbourhood? the infernal close fumes of all kinds of things have quite discomposed my interior, and I never could drink gin, it's a miserable tippie."

"Oh, yes, I will send and get you as good brandy as you drink in your club-room—only pay for it."

"Oh, certainly!" replied the Colonel, putting a piece of gold on the table; "besides, George, I will help you till we contrive not only to pluck this worthy Lord Pen-

church quite clean, but concoct some scheme also to have our revenge upon Claude Tregannon. Curse him!" he added vehemently; "I hate him mortally, and yet, somehow; I think we may make some thousands by your secret."

"Don't see how," said George, getting up; and taking an old rusty poker, he struck the low ceiling five times,— "we don't use bells here," he said, with a laugh. "The rookery has its young rooks, who understands more things than one—ha!" as a knock sounded at the door, "there's my messenger;" and opening the door, he admitted a most extraordinary looking imp—a boy of some eleven or twelve years of age.

He was covered certainly, but with rags of every possible colour; his eyes were set crooked in his head, and one shoulder was full eight inches higher than the other; he limped awfully on coming into the room, and the stiff, red hair on his head stood up like the quills of a porcupine; he had a leer on his face that appeared to make his mouth stretch from ear to ear; these latter appendages were of singular length, indeed, his parents and the inhabitants of the rookery had been in the habit of lifting him up by them from his earliest years, and the urchin, like a true bred spaniel, never yelled.

"Well, this is the devil's specimen of a messenger you have got," observed the Colonel, eyeing the imp as he passed round the table.

"Oh! he's better than he looks," said Black George, laughing; "he's only showing off before you. Here, Fly," giving the boy a bottle and the money, "get some slush, *i. e.* brandy; mind that the man gives the right sort."

"Oh! won't I?" replied the imp, limping towards the door, and then turning back, with a loud laugh, handed the startled Colonel the green silk purse he had the moment before put in his pocket; "dropt it, 'spose," he said grinning, and then dropping his shortened leg, ran off with the agility of a lamp-lighter.

"Curse the young devil!" cried the Colonel, "he prigg'd my purse; he's a nice specimen of your rooks."

"Oh, yes!" returned George, "he's a credit to the family of rooks; they all live by the dexterity of their fingers, not their bills. That imp is neither lame, nor

swivel-eyed, or hump-backed; he saw you were a stranger, and was only showing you his fancy shape. He's rather a smart-looking lad, but for his ears—"

In less than ten minutes the lad was back, walking lamely into the room, his eyes quite straight, and his shoulders in their right place.

"Wants nothing else, eh?" said the boy, eyeing the Colonel curiously.

"No; there's a shilling for you," said Colonel Thornback.

This liberality seemed to please the urchin; for as the Colonel presented the money, he turned right over on his head, and took the shilling with his extremities, and in that position left the room rapidly.

Black George, with a laugh, closed the door; and the Colonel having tasted the brandy and declared it excellent, mixed his glass.

"Now in the first place, George, said the Colonel, making himself as comfortable as he could in the crazy chair he sat on, "what do you intend to do, now you are in London? for I suppose you came up after this Claude Tregannon."

"Yes," returned the other with his old and terrible look, which rather startled his brother, "yes, after that affair in the cave, I swore I would be revenged on him—"

"Yes, yes," interrupted the Colonel, "revenge is a very sweet feeling—very; but do not you think a few thousands might be had first, and revenge after?"

"No objection to that either," replied Black George, "so that I make him feel me after I am satisfied. Curse him, I cannot think how I ever spared him when a boy!"

"Why no good could come of knocking him on the head then," said the Colonel. "If this old comrade of yours, James Tregannon, wanted to get rid of him, there would be no wonder; he was very soft to let him live, when he had his hand so nicely on his throat as a child; he need not have had a confidant then."

"You are mistaken there, William; I knew he was to steal the child, and if he had killed him, of course he would have been equally in my power; but I cannot say how it was—he seemed to have a horror of taking the child's life, and I would not listen to it myself then. But I—I'm a

d—d deal harder hearted than I was. I'm nearly fifty, and I can't go the old dodges over again. If I could get a round sum, I would go to America."

"Ah, America won't do for me," replied the Colonel; "it's a queer place, that America. You see I've grown rather aristocratic in my person and habits; besides I am afraid the climate would not agree with me. We are thinking (Brooks and I) of going shortly on the Continent; Italy is a fine country, and swarming with gentlemen, who find this kingdom rather limited in extent to live in; but we want to complete our schemes first. Now it appears to me, as a merchant would say, there is a fine opening for business and speculation; this Claude Tregannon is a mine, if properly worked."

"I cannot see it," said Black George. "You do not know him. Do you think he would pay me for betraying James Tregannon, even supposing that there was no danger of being hung, as soon as my evidence was taken. Not he; he would scorn to owe his restoration to his title and estates by bribery; he would compel me, if he could, and hang me afterwards; but he would never bribe me. He is going to try if the law will reinstate him, satisfied with whatever proofs he has contrived to get. I do not know what kind they are; but I think he has no chance without my confession or that of James Tregannon, and if I am taken I will swear he is my own son, an assertion it will be very difficult to deny. Now, owing to the villany of that rascally Stonehenge, the attorney, James Tregannon is deprived of the estate for several years, where he is now, or how he lives, I know not; he is allowed a certain sum out of the estate—so turn it which way you will, I do not see any way of making money out of it."

"Well, upon my soul, George, I am rather puzzled; but are you sure there was nothing left in the cave that might lead to a discovery of who he is, or your having a hand in his abduction?"

"Why, of course, William, he knows well enough that I had the keeping of him. As to what's in the cave, I can't say; I saw a bundle of child's clothes, and intended destroying them. I suppose they were my poor boy's, and left there by James Tregannon; I also lost an old almanac, in which I used to make some odd remarks; but no name

in it. I fancied my little boy had got hold of that, and torn it up; but as to anything else, I took care of that. Cursed strange he should come into the country and visit that cave; I can't imagine how he received intelligence of its whereabouts. I know I had a narrow escape, and only that I lay hid in the mine for a fortnight, I should have been nabbed."

"Yes—you had a narrow escape of swinging from a yard-arm, George. I see now I must let Lord Penchurch shoot him. I was willing to pocket his cursed insolence when you made me acquainted with the facts of his story, as I thought a few thousands might be made out of him. But now tell the truth, George, what are you going to do here—you are surely not going gipsying again—eh?"

"No; I have a better scheme in my head than that. I told you that Claude Tregannon was betrothed to a young girl he saved from some sinking ship. This girl will be enormously rich, and could even now command almost any sum from her wealthy old uncle."

"Why, zounds!" interrupted the Colonel, "that's the girl the quarrel began about with Lord Penchurch—a Miss Fleetwood—a city heiress. Why, my friend Penchurch would give five thousand pounds to get this girl into his power; he would marry her whether she liked it or not. It would be a first-rate speculation."

"Quite out of the question," said George. "How the devil can you get her out of the city? while she was residing in a cottage near Charmouth, it might have been done easy enough—now it's not to be thought of."

"Well, I do not see that," remarked the Colonel; "but what's your project?"

"Well, listen to me," answered Black George. "Your affair of the duel put it into my head. You must get this Lord Penchurch to go out and make some pretence or other that the duel shall take place on Black Heath, at a spot I will particularise to you; for I have helped to take many a purse within half a mile of it."

"Well," impatiently put in the Colonel, finding his brother pause.

"Let the hour be five or six o'clock in the morning, and it will be just grey dawn. There is a deep quarry, within ten yards of the spot, I will show you on the Heath. I will

have eight men concealed there that will face the devil for five pounds a man, and a promise of five pounds more in perspective."

"Why, zounds!" interrupted the Colonel, in a tone of the greatest surprise, "you do not dream of seizing such a man as this Claude Tregannon in open day, with loaded pistols in his possession? He'd shoot the first man that would attempt to seize him."

"My dear brother," returned Black George, with a smile; "you are very green for a full-grown Colonel. You ought to know that the pistols will not be loaded till all concerned are present—before that we shall have seized our man—you can manage to allay his lordship's uneasiness—thus the only one likely to resist is Tregannon's second—who is he? and what kind of man is he?"

"He is," returned the colonel, "a very ugly customer—very like his friend Tregannon—pluck enough to face a dozen of you in defence of his friend."

"Ah, then, we shall provide for him; a knock on the head with a loaded bludgeon will keep him quiet for a time."

"But, zounds, what are you going to do with Claude Tregannon, when you get him?" inquired the Colonel; "recollect, he's no baby that you can wrap up in a handkerchief. There will be a hue and cry after you; we cannot be witness to this affair without making some resistance, and afterwards stating the particulars before a magistrate."

"Pooh!" exclaimed Black George: "you are making difficulties. I tell you I can make ten thousand pounds out of this affair; if you manage your part well, you shall have two thousand pounds as your share, and nothing to do."

The Colonel mixed a very strong glass of hot brandy, and stirred it for full five minutes before he raised his eyes from the tumbler. At length he looked up, saying—

"I suppose you expect me to find the first eight five-pound notes?"

"My exchequer is empty," observed Black George.

"Well then," returned the Colonel, "let me fully and clearly into your plan:—shew how the ten thousand is to be got; and then I will say whether I will run the risk or not—for there is a great risk."

"None whatever to you," replied Black George; "but now pay attention to my plan."

For nearly half-an-hour George Thornback continued to explain his project to his brother; and when he had ended, the Colonel held out his hand, saying—

"I'm satisfied; you shall have the money to-morrow; and the day after I will have my friend Penchurch out. It's now late, and confoundedly dark—just summon that imp from above to guide me out of this cursed place, put me into Oxford Street, or any street leading into it, and I shall do very well; to-morrow night I will be here at the same hour, by that time you will have completed all your arrangements, and I mine, so take care of yourself."

The urchin was summoned, and the Colonel given in charge to him—a very necessary precaution in such a district; for as they passed through the streets, many a password and sign was made by the boy to persons the Colonel could scarcely distinguish in the gloom of the night.

At the period of our story, there existed on Blackheath, just before you come to the ascent to Shooter's Hill, a very deep quarry, on its edge grew a stunted beach tree; the quarry was an abandoned one, very deep, and had several feet of water at the bottom.

No trace of this quarry now exists, nor of a public house that stood within less than a quarter of a mile of it, some distance from the public road. Now this inn or alehouse bore a very bad name. It was a square stone building, two stories high, with an attempt at a garden at the back, but possessing neither outbuildings nor offices of any kind. There was a look of singular nakedness about the house and the place, standing in a hollow, and not very visible till you came suddenly upon it, following a kind of footway from the quarry. It had for a sign a very primitive painting of a pickaxe, and pass when you would, you never saw a human being in or about the place.

Shooter's Hill was notorious at that period for daring highway robberies, and the vicinity of Blackheath also enjoyed its share of notoriety.

We must now request our readers to enter with us the said alehouse on the night after the interview of the two brothers in the Rookery—the hour was eleven. Sitting in a back-room, with bare, dirty-plastered walls, a sanded

floor, but rendered habitable by a bright seacoal fire, was Black George, attired as an Essex drover, his black grizzled hair covered by a wig of sandy hue, deprived of whiskers and beard, and disguised by the wig, he would easily have escaped detection, even by one very well acquainted with his person. His legs were cased in thick, untanned leather leggings, reaching to the knees, corderoy breeches, and a sheep's-skin waistcoat, his coat was a long garment of grey frieze cloth; he was sitting on a bench, his huge limbs stretched out towards the fire, and his elbow resting on a strong deal table, on which was laid a formidable looking stick; he was quite alone, and seemed buried in deep thought, leaning his head on his hand, and his eyes fixed on the fire.

As he thus sat, a shrill whistle sounded without the one casement the room contained.

"Ha, he's quick!" muttered Black George, rising.

And going to the window, opened it, and at once the urchin of the Rookery, "Fly-by-Night," sprang into the room. He was covered with the same rags, and his stiff red hair was without a covering of any sort, though a thick drizzling rain was falling.

"Well, Fly, did you get it?" asked Black George, closing the window.

"Oh, yes; let I alone," said the urchin, approaching the fire; and plunging his hand amidst his rags, he drew forth a sealed paper. "There," said he, "I seed him myself."

While the boy was drying himself at the fire, Black George opened the note—its contents were as follows:—

"I have, at last, brought his lordship to the scratch—had a world of trouble with C—— T——'s friend; but to-morrow at six o'clock they will meet at the place you appointed; be careful and prepared; his lordship knows nothing whatever about our project, though up to a dodge or two, he would not stand that—your change of plan is admirable."

"Humph," muttered Black George, "he is right. Now, Fly, here's something for you to eat and drink—and be off home."

And taking out of a cupboard a loaf of bread and several slices of ham, he gave them to the boy, with a mug of porter. These things seemed to please greatly, for Fly devoured them greedily, grinning the whole time, and making the most extraordinary contortions of features. Having finished his meal, Black George opened the window, and, without a word, but a knowing nod of the head, the urchin leaped out, amidst a relentless shower of rain, and disappeared in the gloom.

George Thornback returned to the fire, and tossed the letter he had received into the flames, and as he did so the door of the room opened, and a man entered. This individual was the landlord of the "Pickaxe;" he was not more than forty, with a broad face, strongly marked with the smallpox, middle height, but singularly massively built.

"Well," said the landlord, taking a chair and sitting down, "all's ready, George; but mind, no blood-shedding in this affair—I set my face against anything of the kind; or,—"

"I told you before," interrupted George, sharply, "that there was nothing of the sort intended. There will be no suspicion attached to this house or to you—the thing is too well arranged. When I get the blunt you shall finger your five hundred pounds. No one will come except myself after we get him here; all you will have to do is to supply with food, which you can lower down in a basket. It wont do, strong as you are, to let him get a grip of you: he's a queer customer for any man living, I can tell you."

"Oh, I'm not afraid of him or any one else," returned the host of the "Pickaxe," "still I will do as you say. I put a mattress and some blankets into the place to keep him warm, for it's but a rum place. Now I hope as how ten or twelve days will bring the thing to a close, for I can't hold the house longer—I'm watched."

"Oh, five or six," said George Thornback, "will, I hope, bring the thing to a finish. Now get us something to drink."

The landlord left the room, returning shortly after, with spirits and hot water, when the two companions sat down to pass the time, till the hour of action arrived, in drinking.

CHAPTER XXIV

A LITTLE before six o'clock, on a damp, foggy morning, in the latter end of September, a chaise and pair, with two gentlemen inside, came slowly up the steep hill of Blackheath. The rain of the previous night had ceased, but a thick, hazy atmosphere had succeeded. On reaching the summit of the hill, the chaise turned off the road across the heath, till a kind of footpath was reached, with a stout post erected on its edge: within three yards of this post was a thick thorn hedge, and here the chaise stopped, and the two gentlemen alighted. They were muffled in their mantles, and one of them carried a duelling case, containing pistols. Telling the postilion to go back with the chaise to the —— Inn, that stood just on the summit of the hill, and wait there for them, and take what refreshment he and his horses required, they walked on.

"We are first, I see, on the ground, Claude," said the shortest of the two gentlemen; "and I fancy somehow—indeed, I always thought so—that we shall have it all to ourselves. I never will believe that Penchurch will meet you fairly."

"He will be quite safe from me if he does," returned Claude. "He is sufficiently punished by the loss of his teeth, and a marked lip for the rest of his life."

"By Jove, Claude, that's a curious idea of yours, coming out here such a morning as this, to stand to be shot at like a young rook. Faith, you might get hit, coward as he is. Ha, there is the old stunted beach tree; many a meeting that has witnessed, if it could only tell tales."

Just as Mr. Delaware spoke, they were passing a low broken wall, formed of quarry stones, piled promiscuously, and six or eight men, with their faces blackened, sprung over, and with loaded bludgeons struck at the two young men. A blow on the back of the head crushed through Mr. Delaware's hat, and stretched him senseless on the sod. The blow aimed at his companion, missed the head, but came with great force upon his left shoulder, causing him to stagger back a pace or two. The next instant he drew one of the small pocket pistols he always carried, and before a second blow could be struck, by a tall, powerful

man, in a long frieze coat, Claude levelled and fired direct in his face. The aim was sure and fatal, Black George's doom—for it was that individual—was sealed; with a groan of intense agony he fell forward on his face, rolling over in torture. The effect of his fall upon the other men was instantaneous. They stood for a moment electrified, during which pause Tregannon drew his other pistol from his vest, and with a resolute determination of seizing one of the ruffians, advanced towards them, but without the slightest hesitation, they all turned and fled precipitately across the heath. The fact was, they saw that Black George was mortally wounded, and without him the enterprise was utterly hopeless.

Our hero, without heeding the ruffian he had prostrated, turned to the side of his friend, who was beginning to recover, and had just raised himself on his elbow, looking deadly pale, the collar of his coat being saturated with the blood that flowed from a cut in the back of the head. Our hero threw himself beside him, and, with great emotion, said—

“My dear Frederick, this is a miserable business that I have brought upon you; let me carry or help you to the chaise.”

“Tut, a knock on the head is nothing new to me, Claude, as you ought to remember. Thank God, I see you safe. I am a little bewildered, but if I had a mug of water I should feel well enough.

“I will get you water in a minute,” said Claude, starting up, and heedless of the deep groans that came from the dying man near them, he hurried down into the quarry, and brought up a hat full of water.

Delaware, with a smile, drank some, and then Claude bathed his face and head, and the faintness was beginning to pass off rapidly, when they observed three persons approaching the spot. The next moment they recognised Lord Penchurch, Colonel Thornback, and a surgeon. Colonel Thornback became lividly pale when his eyes rested upon Claude Tregannon; he had not the power to utter a word, but stood aghast, and uncertain how to act. Lord Penchurch himself seemed agitated. Frederick Delaware, by this time, was able to stand up, and leaning on Claude Tregannon, he walked up to the astounded Colonel Thornback, sa-

"You are somewhat late, sir, but better late than never; our time has been passed, as you may perceive, in a contest with some rascals, who, I suppose, thought to rob us. My friend has shot one of them, I have got an ugly knock on the back of the head, but that need not prevent our proceeding in our original intention.

"Good God," cried the young surgeon, advancing, "you are bleeding, sir; allow me," and with much kindness of manner, he drew some bandages from his pockets, and prepared to dress the wound. Just then, for the first time, a low groan of agony reached the ears of the party.

"There is some one either dying or severely hurt here," observed the surgeon.

"One of the ruffians whom I shot," replied Claude, "I fear he is dying."

He had no idea as he said this, that he had killed the man he most abhorred in the world, the villain who had so cruelly treated him in his early years.

The whole party advanced towards the man, but the moment Colonel Thornback caught a sight of the prostrate form of his brother, his whole body shook and quivered as if in a tertian ague, large drops of perspiration fell from his forehead; for this man, with all his vices, loved his brother, who was the only tie of relationship he possessed. As he stood thus, the eyes of all around became fixed upon him with wondering amazement, the dying man rolled round, displacing his wig of sandy hair; the moment Claude Tregannon's eyes rested fully on his face, he recognised him—

"This is indeed retribution," he exclaimed aloud.

With a mighty effort, Black George raised himself on his elbow, when his eyes rested on those of his horror-struck brother, whose look and manner attracted the wonder and amazement of all around; for regardless of the curious and searching gaze of the spectators, Colonel Thornback threw himself on his knees beside his dying brother, and took one of his hands in his. With a terrible struggle and gasping for breath, George half raised himself, and holding forth his arm, pointed to Claude, who stood close by him with a serious, stern expression—

"Hear me, all present," gasped the sufferer, "that man who calls himself Tregannon," he paused and groaned heavily, but with a mighty effort he seemed to stay the

hand of death, and continued distinctly: "That man has slain his father—he is my only child, I swear it—"

A rush of blood stopped his words, and the next instant he fell back a corpse.

All eyes at once were involuntarily fixed upon Claude Tregannon, but not a muscle quivered, or a feature betrayed the slightest emotion, as he stood, his tall form erect, his arms folded across his broad chest, gazing steadily and sternly at the lifeless form of his deadly foe—

"Miserable wretch," he exclaimed, "to face his God with a lie, a vile, fearful lie upon his lips."

So astounded were Lord Penchurch and the surgeon at the words uttered by Black George, that Colonel Thornback had time to recover his presence of mind; and as all present turned to look at our hero, he rose from his knees fearfully pale, it is true, but collected in manner, and vowing, in his heart, to take a deadly revenge upon the slayer of his brother—he knew that brother died with a lie upon his lips, that he had perilled his soul for vengeance.

"Now, my lord," said Claude Tregannon turning to Lord Penchurch with a cold, stern countenance, "I am at your service; my purpose is changed with that villain's death, and I now tell you plainly, if you require me to give you satisfaction, it must end only with the death of one or other of us."

Lord Penchurch was very pale, and considerably agitated; he looked round for his friend the Colonel, who was standing a few paces off, as pale as himself, and seemingly bewildered; but the moment the Colonel heard the word of Claude, he came forward, and just as Lord Penchurch was about to speak, said—

"Stay, my lord; it is my duty to answer the insolent threat held out to you. No, his lordship shall not fight you," he fiercely continued, the terrible passion struggling within sending back the blood to his pale cheek as he confronted Claude Tregannon; "what! a nobleman meet *the son* of a 'highwayman or a felon!'"

Claude was a being of impulse; his young life in some respects had been one of frequent suffering in mind—crue usage in childhood had embittered many hours of his life and to throw a doubt upon his birth, caused his blood to boil. No sooner, therefore, had Colonel Thornback uttered

the words he did, than with a blow, he felled him to his feet.

The false Colonel was a villain, but he was no coward; he rose up trembling with passion, a thousand wild and terrible thoughts whirling through his brain; but wiping the blood from his face, and mastering his rage, he approached his opponent, who was speaking to his friend, Frederick Delaware.

"Man!" he exclaimed, laying his hand upon his shoulder, "after all, you are but a coward; confident in your brute strength, you trust to that alone. I say, before these gentlemen, that you are a coward! and if you do not give me satisfaction on this spot—now—this moment—"

Delaware looked up into his friend's face anxiously and seriously.

"Well, sir," returned Claude, "you shall be satisfied; there are persons who may mistake you for a gentleman—I am not one of them. Nevertheless as I have struck you for your gross and insolent conduct, you shall be gratified. This gentleman," turning to Delaware, "will arrange the matter with his lordship, who, no doubt, will think little of the disgrace of being your second."

"D——!" exclaimed Colonel Thornback, stamping with rage; and as Claude turned away, he heard him say, swearing another oath, "I will shoot him dead!"

"Stay, sir!" interrupted Frederick Delaware, "I must have a word with you first; I cannot allow my friend to follow the bent of his hasty temper; you only received the punishment you richly deserved, for the cursed, brutal, and false words you uttered. You are aware that I know you. If you do not wish further exposure, take my advice, and retire with your friend; for if you insist on a meeting, mind you! though it will pain me to make the disclosure, yet it shall be done. Now, sir! take your choice; retire with his lordship, who I am sure will be very glad to quit, or I shall call all present to witness what I have to say. A duel, after the events of this morning, would lead to a very singular investigation; and moreover, in my mind, you know more about yonder dead man than you would like should be publicly known."

Colonel Thornback scarcely breathed as the last sentence was spoken, he seemed bewildered; many reasons

urged him to follow the advice given him, for an exposure before Lord Penchurch and the young surgeon, who was a gentleman, would be ruinous; still the burning hatred he felt against the slayer of his brother, prompted him to brave exposure. After a pause of a few moments, some idea suddenly struck him, and he answered—

“Well, sir, I will follow your advice; but a time will come when I shall be able to repay the gross insults I have received this day.”

“I doubt it, sir,” returned the other, coolly; “you could not for a moment, whatever your connexion with that dead ruffian may be—”

“Take care, sir!” passionately interrupted the Colonel, “for even you may go too far for my forbearance.”

With a haughty curl of the lip, Delaware gazed sternly at the Colonel.

“’Tis you, sir,” he replied, “mistake your position. Do not for an instant imagine that I will ever become your antagonist. Let this end; you know what I was going to say—that is enough.”

A withering execration broke from the Colonel’s lips; but he turned away, joined his lordship, and, after some few words between them, making a sign to the surgeon to follow, they walked on.

“This is a very strange affair,” said that gentleman, addressing Mr. Delaware, “and to your friend a very painful one. Do not imagine, I entreat, that I attach any importance to the words spoken by that dead villain; mysterious as they were, they appeared to me to be uttered with a motive to injure your friend, whose strange history I, singularly enough, happen to know.”

“Ha, indeed!” exclaimed Claude, who heard the words, “how is that?—for I certainly never had the pleasure of seeing you before.”

“No, sir, but Mr. Treestrail, whom you know, is my father-in-law; and I am just returned from a visit to him. You must excuse his making me acquainted with most of the particulars of your life. When Lord Penchurch called yesterday, and mentioned his wish that I should accompany him to this place, saying it was to meet you, I at once consented, hoping if any accident occurred I might be of assistance. When that man uttered the words he did, I

at once conjectured he was the very villain Mr. Treestrail called 'Black George.' And now, my dear sir, all I have to observe is, that as this affair will not end here, for we must give notice to the nearest magistrate of this man's death, you may make use of my evidence in any way you may think fit."

"I feel much obliged, sir," said Claude, and will do so. I remember Mr. Treestrail did say his eldest daughter had married a Mr. Bateman, a surgeon, who was in good practice in London; and though he said, laughing, 'I trust you will never require his professional aid, I will give you his address;' and holding out his hand, Claude grasped that of Mr. Bateman in a very friendly manner. The surgeon then followed his lordship.

"I can understand this affair now, Claude," said his friend Delaware. "I at first thought we had been attacked by a party of highwaymen, though such an occurrence at this hour of the day appeared unusual; now I see it was intended either to murder you or carry you off somewhere. There must be some place near here where the rascals meant to put you; for it's quite impossible they could dream, in broad day, of carrying you any distance. Well, that black villain has met his doom at last, and died with a fearful lie on his lips. How horrible!"

"It is, in truth, horrible; but let us go on to the village," answered Claude; "we must give notice to the authorities about this attack upon us, and get this miserable wretch's body removed. He will never again give testimony for or against me in this world; nevertheless, I wish I had not shot him. How do you feel?"

"Not much the worse for the knock; but cannot say as much for my hat," he added, picking up his crushed beaver.

"I feel my shoulder marvellously stiff," returned our hero, as they moved on across the heath. "The villain missed my head, luckily, but I got the full force of the blow on my left shoulder."

"How is that, Claude? you did not say you were hurt before."

"I was so excited when I beheld the scoffing sneer of Lord Penchurch, when he heard the miserable villain's words," replied Claude, "that I felt nothing, if I except

the strong desire which I experienced to shoot his lordship. In the excitement of the moment, I certainly made use of some very harsh words to him.—By-the-bye, did you observe the conduct of that pretender, Colonel Thornback, with respect to the ruffian I shot? Did you remark his countenance, when he threw himself beside the dying man, the positive anguish expressed in his features? Do you know, Frederick, there is a strong resemblance between them; when I first saw that Colonel, I was struck with his likeness to some one I had seen.”

“There is some connexion between them, that is very certain, replied Mr. Delaware, thoughtfully. “The Colonel’s name I know now, for I made inquiries, is really Thornback; his father, it is well known, was a captain in the army, and had two sons. Can it be possible they were brothers?”

“Not at all impossible,” returned our hero. “But here we are—there is a crowd I see gathered about the chaise; I suppose some account of this affair has got abroad in the village. I heard the surgeon say, they left a chaise and four on the left of the hill.”

As they approached their own carriage, they observed four men, whom they knew were of the constabulary, come out of the house. On seeing them, one of the men approached, and, touching his hat, said—

“Will you be kind enough to go into the house, gentlemen? Mr. Fordyce, our magistrate, is up-stairs, and wishes to see you. We are going, with a stretcher, for the body of the man one of you young gentlemen shot, this morning.”

“Very good,” observed Claude, entering the house, as the constable, accompanied by four men conveying a stretcher, proceeded towards the scene of action, followed by a crowd of curious persons.

On entering the best room of the little inn, the young men perceived a middle-aged gentleman seated at a table, writing, and a young man, his clerk, also occupied making or copying notes.

Mr. Fordyce the magistrate looked up, and bowing, said—

“Mr. Delaware and Mr. Tregannon, I presume.”

On their returning his salutation, he politely requested

them to be seated, and let him know the whole facts of what had happened. This Claude gave in a clear and plain statement, the clerk taking down every word he uttered.

The Honourable Mr. Delaware's account was also taken.

"Now, pardon me, sir," said the magistrate after he had read over both documents, speaking to our hero, and taking up a paper from the table, and running his eye over its contents. "I have here Lord Penchurch's statement, I will read it you. Should any part of it give you offence, pray excuse me, I am merely doing my duty as a magistrate. His lordship states, and so does Colonel Thornback, that on arriving on the ground where he expected to meet you two gentlemen, he was surprised to find you and Mr. Delaware in a state of great excitement, and near you, lying on the ground, was a man, apparently dying from a pistol-shot, the surgeon Mr. Bateman states, through the throat. That the man recovered sufficiently to declare, in the presence of all there, that he owed his death to you, Mr. Tregannon, and that with his dying breath he also declared you were his son. Colonel Thornback's declaration is the same, and so is Mr. Bateman's, except that he positively asserts that the words uttered were utterly false, and spoken evidently from motives of deadly hatred. Is there anything in this statement, Mr Tregannon, that you object to, or that is not correct?"

"No, sir," answered Claude, quite calmly, "it is as his lordship has asserted; it is quite out of my power to give you a history of myself. Neither is it necessary, in point of fact, as the whole will come before the public in time. I can only say that what that miserable wretch swore in his last moments, is a most wicked falsehood. The man I shot has personated every vile character it was possible to assume in his career through life."

"Well, gentlemen," said Mr. Fordyce, who appeared very much struck with the persons and manners of the two young men, "if you will be kind enough to put your names and places of abode to your statements, I will not longer detain you."

The friends had just complied with the magistrates request, when the sound of many voices without attracted their attention. The door of the chamber was opened, and one of the constables entered the room, saying, hastily,—

"Please your worship, we could not find the body—it has been removed—we have searched all round, but in vain; two of the men have gone on to a low alehouse, called the 'Pickaxe,' which has rather a bad name in this neighbourhood, to make inquiries, but there is no other habitation that we know of for some distance."

"This is very extraordinary," observed Mr. Fordyce; "you left the body there, gentlemen—are you sure the man was dead?"

"He certainly was dead," returned Claude. "Mr. Bateman examined him and declared life was quite extinct. Some of his comrades must have returned, but its out of the question that they could have carried the body far in the time."

"That alehouse you call the 'Pickaxe,' remarked the Honourable Frederick Delaware, "ought to be well searched: I have heard that place spoken of before now as a rendezvous for highwaymen and other evil characters."

"So it is said to be, sir," remarked the police officer, "and we have often visited it, but never found any one on the premises but an old woman and a young girl, rather soft and simple: the old woman said her husband was a drover, was younger than herself by several years, and drove cattle from Wales for the Essex marshes, and she earned a penny now and then by selling—bad ale," added the constable, with a smile, "for I tasted it, as an excuse for asking questions."

"Well," said Mr Fordyce, "you must get more help, and make a strict search all round the vicinity of that house. I will not detain you longer, gentlemen, he added, turning to our two friends, who immediately departed, entered their chaise, and drove off to London, considerably surprised at the disappearance of Black George's body.

CHAPTER XXV

FANNY FLEETWOOD had passed a most miserable night; she was not aware that her lover was to meet Lord Penchurch the following morning; but she strongly feared and suspected he would, and her anxiety was terrible. Hannah,

who had become greatly attached to her, did all in her power to comfort and assure her that Claude incurred no risk whatever from an encounter with his lordship; still Fanny sighed, and wished she could think so.

About eleven o'clock the morning of the projected duel, a chaise drove up to the door, and Claude Tregannon jumped out.

Oh, the joy that rushed through the young girl's heart as he entered the room, and pressed a kiss upon her glowing cheek! For several moments they did not speak, for their hearts were full.

"You have met that bad man, Claude," said Fanny, at length, looking into the face of her lover; "you are safe, I see; but I trust in God nothing has occurred to your antagonist."

"We did not waste even powder on one another, my sweet girl."

Fanny looked surprised; and Claude gave her a full account of the events of the morning—only suppressing Colonel Thornback's expressions of revenge.

The young girl's cheek became very pale as she listened to her lover's recital, mentally thanking God for his providential escape.

"And so, dear Claude, the persecutor of your young life is dead? Good God!" and she shuddered; "but to die—as he died—with that fearful falsehood on his lips—how dreadful! and you have lost all chance of his ever giving evidence in your favour."

"I never imagined he would testify anything in my cause even if he had been secured alive. He has only done, dearest, what I expected he would, if ever brought before a jury. With him we have done for ever. What has become of his body, it will, I fancy, be difficult to discover. I should imagine his comrades have carried it off, and buried him; but why such rascals should take that trouble surprises me. But how is your uncle; and how is the ship getting on?"

"Oh, he is right well, dear Claude: somewhat troubled at losing his little Fan; but," she added, with a smile, and a look of pure affection, "he fully expects you will bring her back to him."

"If I do not, returned Claude, with much emotion; and

pressing the hand he held, "I will never return to this country; for without this dear hand wealth and titles would be mere baubles."

A tear was in Fanny's eyes; but, with a bright smile, she said,—

"We will trust to Providence, and pray that we may never be separated on this earth; but if we are we shall have the blessed hope of a union above."

Madame D'Arblay just then entered; she was rejoiced to see Claude, for she had felt, also, rather uneasy about his quarrel with Lord Penchurch.

"I must leave Fanny to give you all the particulars of my adventures this morning," said our hero, rising; "I must be off to the docks, and see Mr. Fleetwood, and make some kind of preparation for assuming my temporary command of the 'Surinam;' she will be ready, I suppose, for sea in a few days."

"Uncle says to-morrow week positively," said Fanny; and adding, internally, "Oh, how I wish the day was come!"

Claude Tregannon and the cheerful, kind-hearted Mr. Fleetwood returned to dinner, having seen the crew of the yacht on board the "Surinam," all overjoyed in their hearts at their young master having the command of the ship.

Two days after, Sir Charles Treastle arrived in London, and, to Claude's great delight, his sister Mary accompanied him. As she affectionately embraced her brother, she said,—

"I have come up to town, dear Claude, purposely to see and learn to love Fanny; you positively so bewitched me with your description of her, that I could not rest till I saw her."

"There is no one can match her in beauty and grace, save yourself, dear Mary," answered Claude, affectionately. "I rejoice to see the soft bloom on your cheek returned, as I somehow feared there might still linger some affection in that kind heart for a most unworthy individual."

"Make yourself quite easy," replied Mary, with a smile, "his lordship never made but a very light impression on either my heart or mind. Have you seen or heard of him since you met at Treastle?"

"I have both seen and heard from him, as you shall hear."

And Claude gave his sister a full account of all that had occurred since his arrival in London.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Mary, "from what a bad man you saved me; what a deceitful wretch; and what an escape you had from that villain, Black George. I trust in goodness you incur no risk from the enmity of that false Colonel whom you say so resembled him."

"There is very little to fear from him, Mary; but as it wants some hours to dinner, I will order a carriage, and take you to be introduced to Fanny. To-morrow evening you will meet at her uncle's my noble-hearted friend Frederick Delaware, as fine, handsome, and generous a fellow as ever lived."

"Well," observed the lively girl, "I'm positively getting fast into that dangerous period when girls are turned into old maids, so I suppose there is no great danger to be encountered in meeting that handsome friend of yours."

"There may be some danger to him in the encounter, Mary. I know he is heart-free at present," added Claude, laughing; "but as he is four or five years older than myself, you cannot expect him to have escaped Cupid's shafts all this time."

"Oh, ho," laughed Mary; "so he has been tried in something of the same kind of fire as singed me! Ah! we shall become good friends, no doubt. By-the-bye, Sir Charles is very intimate with his father, Lord Torwood; his lordship was once, I remember it well, though eight or nine years ago, at Treastle, wanting to persuade Sir Charles to stand for the county; but my brother-in-law has no ambition of that kind. Ah, there's the carriage. Let us be off—I am dying to see Fanny."

Captivated by each other's loveliness, generous, free-hearted, fond, and affectionate by nature, the two girls met but to love each other. Though several years older than Fanny Fleetwood, Mary's heart was young and fresh, and her manners simple. The former had seen a good deal of the world, travelled much, and therefore the disparity in age was not perceptible.

Fanny entreated her new sister, as she called her, with

a sweet smile, to remain with her till she sailed for India. And Mary, whilst she gaily consented, said—

“It will, I fear, only add to my regret, when I lose you”

“But,” observed Fanny, with another innocent smile, “Claude will soon bring me back again.”

“Claude has won a treasure,” whispered Mary, as she kissed her cheek, at parting, promising to return the next morning to stay till the blue Peter was hoisted over the decks of the “Surinam.”

Whilst Sir Charles Treacastle was busy with the gentlemen of the long robe, the two girls, attended by the Honourable Frederick Delaware and Claude Tregannon, visited the Indiaman, and every place worthy their attention; and it soon became evident to Claude that his friend was greatly struck with the beauty and grace of the accomplished Mary Tregannon.

Our hero had received a note from Mr. Fordyce, the magistrate, stating, that notwithstanding the strictest investigation and search round Blackheath, not the slightest trace of the dead man’s body could be discovered, therefore it was useless to trouble either him or his friend further about the affair.

Sir Charles Trocastle was in great spirits. Mr. Saunders and Counsellor Paulet gave him great hopes that his brother-in-law’s cause would ultimately succeed. Every necessary step was, therefore, in preparation to dispute James Tregannon’s succession. Sir Charles had an interview with the creditors who advanced the fifty thousand pounds, and in the handsomest manner declared, that if his brother-in-law’s suit was successful they should be paid their demand in full.

It was Tuesday, and the “Surinam” was to sail on Saturday morning, everything being ready.

One evening, Claude Tregannon had left Mr. Fleetwood’s house early, to return to his hotel to complete some papers he had promised Mr. Saunders to look over. The lamps—not gas ones, for they were not thought of at that time—were just lighted, and he had reached the top of the Haymarket, when a little boy clothed in rags, ran across the street, and, coming up, offered him a folded paper, saying,

“Please, sir, for you.”

Claude was standing under a lamp, and at first paid little attention to the boy's words; but on his repeating them, and holding up the paper, he looked down at the ragged urchin; saying,

"How do you know, boy, that this is for me? There is no direction on it."

"Father told me to give it you—pointed you out from the other side of the street," answered the boy.

Our hero's first impulse was to pay no attention to the child or the folded paper, but, on second thoughts, he opened it, and holding it up to the strong light from a shop window, he read, with considerable surprise, the following words:—

"If, sir, you will follow the bearer of this, he will conduct you to a place where you will receive two most important documents, taken from the person of the man you called Black George, but whose real name was Thornback, brother to the Colonel Thornback you know. If you consider the documents, which will clearly prove your right to the title and estates of Tregannon, worth recompense, the holder of them will deliver them up, trusting to your secrecy and generosity."

Curiosity was strongly aroused. No doubt Black George had been possessed of some document or paper, by which the darkness shrouding his abduction could be cleared away; and, from the tenor of the note he held, it was evident the writer was willing to betray all he knew for gold. One suspicion was, at least, confirmed: Black George and Colonel Thornback were brothers; and an idea crossed Claude's mind, that treachery from the latter might be intended, and the letter be a mere feint to draw him on to danger. He hesitated a few minutes, but the desire to discover all—to set at rest his fears, his doubts—triumphed, and he resolved to follow the boy, let what might be the result.

Turning to look for him, he was amazed at the change he perceived in the child, who came limping up to him, apparently hump-back, and with his eyes hideously distorted. Thinking he was mistaken, Claude looked on the

other side, but a low, chuckling laugh from Fly-by-night, who instantly resumed his natural shape, re-assured him.

"What do you mean, boy, by such tricks," he asked, "and where are you to conduct me?"

"Follow me, and you will see," replied the boy. "I knows no names."

"How far is it, then?" demanded Tregannon.

"I can get there in ten minutes."

"Well, go on; I follow you."

The urchin gave a spring over a post, and then went on at a quick pace into Oxford Street, and then down two or three narrow streets, and in and out of strange lanes, all badly lighted and dirty, till, just as our hero's patience was exhausted, they entered St. Giles's.

Claude Tregannon was amazed at the sight of this abode of gloom and sorrow. The squalid looks of the inhabitants as they flitted past—the oaths and curses of the men and boys disgusted him, and he was just about to halt and give up his object, for he recollected he was quite unarmed, when the boy suddenly stopped before a house in a more retired and quiet part. It was a strange-looking dwelling, with the old, miserable doorposts, leaning on one side; its windows all away, and its dilapidated front, propped up with beams. The boy dived into the dark entrance, and our hero was just about to follow, when he felt his arm caught by some one from behind. Turning, he perceived, by the faint light, a man shabbily dressed, who thrust a pistol into his hands, saying,—

"If you require assistance, fire that: we are seven of us, close at hand. Be cautious!"

Letting go his arm, the man passed on. Utterly astounded by the suddenness and strangeness of the occurrence, Claude paused in the dark entry, with the pistol in his hand, when the voice of the boy from within called out,—

"Are you coming, sir? Here's the stairs."

Hesitation was over; his natural daring and somewhat reckless disposition, where danger was to be met, urged him on, and groping along the passage, he came to a flight of steps, a flash of light gleamed from above; he looked up and saw a man, in the garb of a workman, come to the head of the stairs, holding a candle in his hand.

"Sorry to keep you in the dark, sir," said the man, civilly, holding the light to guide our hero up the crazy stairs.

At that moment it providentially occurred that Claude, glancing past the man holding the candle, saw, though but for an instant, the features of a man looking out cautiously from a half-open door on the landing-place: it was but for a moment, but that was enough—he at once recognised the features of Colonel Thornback.

"Ha! villain," he exclaimed, in a fierce voice, "I recognise you," and he paused, drawing the pistol from his breast, and preparing to retrace his steps.

"D—n —," roared Colonel Thornback, from above, "blow out the candle, and shut the door."

There was a man below, in some dark corner in the passage, for the door of the house was slammed to with violence, and all around became enveloped in darkness.

The young man instantly fired the pistol he held, and retreated towards the door, coming as he did so with great force against some man in the passage, whom he knocked down; two or three others were rushing down the stairs after him, when the door was burst open, and several men entered the passage in time to see Tregannon grasp the villain he had knocked down by the throat.

The men who had come to his rescue were disguised constables; several dark lanterns were opened, and by their light he beheld Colonel Thornback and three others rushing back up the stairs.

"Now, sir, said one of the constables, taking charge of the man our hero held in his grasp, "let us catch the rest of the gang."

Claude, as he placed his foot upon the stairs to follow, beheld the Colonel turn, and deliberately fire a pistol in his face, at the same time uttering a frightful imprecation. The ball went through his waistcoat, slightly raising the flesh. Rushing up the stairs, enraged at the villany of his assailant, Claude and two of the constables came within a few yards of him and his associates, when they dashed in a door, and crossing a room, threw themselves out of the window. He grasped Colonel Thornback by the skirt of his coat; but such was the force of his spring, that the entire half of the garment remained in his hand.

"Don't follow, sir, don't follow," exclaimed one of the constables, laying his hand on our hero's shoulder. "You do not know the ground—you might be murdered in a moment—they are a dangerous gang."

And holding the light out of a window, they perceived that there was a sloping roof about six feet below, and from which they must have reached the ground. To pursue them was out of the question.

"I have something in the pocket of this coat," said Claude Tregannon, pulling out a large pocket-book, with a strong steel clasp; "you had better take charge of this, constable," he continued, "it may contain information of importance."

"Very well, sir," said the constable, whom our hero saw was the same who had given him the pistol; "I will keep it till we can examine its contents before our officer. We have one of the gang, however, thanks to the grip you had of him. He is the man who kept the ale-house called the 'Pickaxe,' on Blackheath. We have been on the look out for him ever since that morning we met you, sir, at Blackheath. But we had better get out of this place with our prisoner—it's a lawless neighbourhood, and if they muster strong, they would attempt his rescue in a moment. You had a narrow escape, sir, from one of the rascals—he fired within three yards of you."

"Yes," answered Claude, "I feel the smart of the ball now; but it's a mere scratch."

As they reached the door of the house, they observed a great crowd of persons assembled—men, women, and children, who set up a yell of "Down with the Charleys,"—"Smash 'em!" and a tumultuous rush was made at the men; but showing a determined front, and swearing that they would shoot down the first rascal that laid a hand on the prisoner, they awed the rabble, and in ten minutes got clear of the locality, amidst cries, shrieks, and sundry missiles hurled after them. Having got into Oxford Street, they were safe enough, though still followed in their progress by a crowd of curious persons.

Claude was anxious to reach his hotel, where he knew Sir Charles Trecastle was waiting for him. So giving the constable his address, that he might call in the morning and let him know what it was necessary he should do, he

summoned a Hackney coach, and drove to the hotel, not having time to get any explanation from the constable, who had given him the pistol in so strange a manner.

The astonishment of Sir Charles was very great when he heard the adventure of the night.

"By Jove, Claude!" he said, "this will never do. Your life is never safe. I shall really be glad when you sail. Before you get back, I trust your rights will be fully acknowledged, or in a train to be so. It is a tedious affair, that of disputing a succession. Presumptive evidence will not do; we must have positive. But what on earth has caused the deadly enmity of this false Colonel Thornback, as he calls himself?"

"That is his name," answered Claude; and if I am to believe a statement that I received to-night—by-the-bye I have it in my pocket," and he pulled out the note given him by "Fly-by-night"—"the Colonel is brother to that villain, Black George; if so, he seeks or sought revenge."

"I fancy," observed Sir Charles, after reading the paper, "that this statement was made to give an appearance of truth to the document, as if the writer was willing to betray the Colonel, and thus put you off your guard."

"Which it certainly did," replied Claude. "That Colonel Thornback must have known of the intended attack upon Blackheath—whether they meant to murder or carry me off I cannot say—but I imagine the latter, as no fire-arms were used."

"I should think," said Sir Charles, "his lordship, when he hears of this affair, and learns the real character of the false Colonel, will feel heartily ashamed of the society he has frequented. Now let us look over these papers; to-morrow we shall learn the contents of the worthy Colonel's pocket-book—it may contain something relative to himself or his brother; and perhaps from the fellow you captured we shall hear what became of the body of that villain, Black George."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE next morning, before our hero and Sir Charles had finished their breakfast, the waiter of the hotel in-

formed them that a constable was below, who requested to see Mr. Tregannon.

"Show him up here," exclaimed both gentlemen.

In a few moments the officer entered the room, and was instantly recognised by Claude as the man who had handed him the pistol the previous evening. The man presented a note from Mr. Fordyce, the magistrate. Both gentlemen eagerly read its contents, expressed in a few words, but they were important, requesting the attendance of our hero at the police office, as the pocket-book, delivered over into the hands of Mr. Fordyce, contained papers of importance concerning Mr. Tregannon.

"Pray," enquired our hero, addressing the constable, "may I request an explanation from you of the reason you furnished me with a pistol last night, when I was entering the house in St. Giles's? You certainly did me infinite service—in fact, you may have saved my life; I am grateful for the service, and will not forget it."

"Oh, you were very welcome sir, to any assistance I offered you. I will tell you how it was, sir:—Ever since that affair on Blackheath, we have been trying to discover some of the gang that attacked you, and especially the landlord of the 'Pickaxe,' having found him out as a receiver of stolen property, and his house being a shelter to highwaymen. At last one of our men caught a glimpse of him crossing a street leading into St. Giles's. Last night, when you entered that place, we were, seven of us, disguised, and dispersed about. I at once recognised you, sir, and saw that young imp, who goes by the cognomen of Fly-by-night, or Fly, guiding you. I immediately guessed you were, yourself, on the track of some of the gang, and that perhaps that young scamp had betrayed their abode; I followed you, and just as you were entering the house, it struck me to put you on your guard, by giving you a pistol, while I ran and collected some of my comrades; in truth, we just arrived in time."

"By Jupiter!" exclaimed Sir Charles, "you just did, by all accounts, and you shall be well rewarded. Tell me—have you gained any trace of this false Colonel Thornback?"

"No, sir, he, it seems, returned that very night to his lodgings, took whatever valuables he had, and absconded,

but where, or how, we have yet to find out; we have, however the landlord of the 'Pickaxe' in safe custody."

"Very good," replied Sir Charles, "give our compliments to Mr. Fordyce, and say we will attend his summons at once."

The constable bowed and left the room, carrying a very substantial reward in his pocket.

On reaching the police-office, they were shown into a private room, and Mr. Fordyce having got rid of a case he was engaged with, soon after joined them.

After a few common-place observations, Mr. Fordyce said—

"You had a very fortunate escape, last night, Mr. Tregannon, and I assure you, you made, at the same time, two very important captures—the pocket-book and the landlord of the 'Pickaxe.' The man was very sullen at first, but this morning he made a kind of confession to save himself from a criminal prosecution. With respect to the contents of the pocket-book, they chiefly concern you, Mr. Tregannon; and I think," added the magistrate, "as far as I can judge from the little I heard of your history, the other day, that the papers which I now give you will, in the eyes of the world, at all events, establish your right to the honourable name you bear."

"I feel grateful to you, Mr. Fordyce," said our hero, "for your attention. My case will shortly come before the public, and my rights be judged by the laws of the land. It is, I am aware, difficult and tedious to dispute a succession, but if I clearly prove my right to the name I bear, I care little if the law refuses to substantiate my claims to the property,"

"Well, you will be able to judge," replied the magistrate, unlocking his desk and taking out a roll of paper. "This," he continued, handing it to our hero, "seems to be a confession written by the man you termed Black George, but who, it appears, was actually the brother of the person well known about town as a Colonel Thornback, as you will read. This George Thornback seems to have had a kind of presentiment of evil over him, the night previous to his intended attack upon you and the Honourable Frederick Delaware. He therefore wrote the papers I have given you, for the purpose of making his brother, Colonel Thorn-

back, fully acquainted with all the circumstances of your abduction from your paternal mansion, and your after fate. Whether those particulars will satisfy the scruples of law, and the lawyers, I cannot say, but they are quite sufficient to place you in your proper position in the opinion of every just and conscientious man. The rest of the contents of the pocket-book are unimportant to you; it contained a considerable sum of money, in notes, two foreign cheques on a city bank, one in the name of Lord Penchurch, for a large amount, the signature his lordship denies, and says it is Colonel Thornback's own writing; and a few papers which throw some light upon a gang of coiners that inhabited the Rookery of St. Giles's. We have also discovered where the body of George Thornback was buried. The landlord of the 'Pickaxe' says that it was conveyed into the cellar of the ale-house, and from that cellar there is a way to get into a vault, purposely made for concealment, and then buried; in that vault it was their intention to confine you, for what purpose we have not yet been able to induce the host of the ale-house to say. I will not, gentlemen," continued Mr. Fordyce, "detain you any longer, as you will be anxious to examine the paper I have given you. Of course the evidence of the constable who beheld the manner in which you obtained it, and my own, as to the examination of the contents, will be ready any time you think necessary to call upon us."

Shaking the magistrate by the hand, the two gentlemen left the office and hastened back to the hotel, and on reaching their apartment, anxiously opened the roll of paper. Claude read aloud the contents:—

"I know not how it is, William, but I feel an unaccountable sensation of coming evil creeping over me. I have an idea that this project of mine will end in my death; be it so; if I succeed in securing the person of Tregannon, you know how to make the most of him. Now that you may fully know how to act should I die, I will give you a clear account, which I have not yet done, of all the circumstances relative to him; I will now explain to you the whole affair—

"James Tregannon, the present Baronet, and I had been long acquainted before his uncle's death—I had joined

a tribe of gipsies to keep out of the way, after a bad job we had made at Leeds—we were encamped on Truro Common, where James Tregannon came to my tent and proposed to me to aid him in stealing his uncle's heir from Tregannon House—

“ ‘And what benefit do you expect to gain by that?’ I demanded.

“ ‘Don't you know,’ said he, ‘that I am the next heir.’

“ ‘You may be,’ I replied; ‘but the Baronet, you say, is not an old man, and the benefit is too remote; besides, I hope you do not intend murdering the child, for if you do I will have no hand in the affair.’

“ ‘What do you take me for,’ he angrily exclaimed, ‘I have no intention of hurting the boy; the loss of the child will kill the father, and the day I gain the property you shall have five thousand pounds.’

“ I consented.

“ The child was stolen—the father poisoned himself the very same night; my child was drowned in the Fal, three or four days after, and was buried, as I told you, as the Baronet's son. With gunpowder I tattooed the initial letters H. C. T—— on the stolen child's shoulder, which, no doubt, remain to this present day. You are aware, William, of what occurred to the boy afterwards—how he fell into the hands of his own uncle; I told you all this briefly the first evening we passed together. I now come to my interview with James Tregannon on the night I stopped the Axminster coach, for though I told you how we met, I did not tell you what passed between us; I upbraided him for not keeping his faith with me, and he, after stating the reasons, said—

“ ‘That cursed attorney, Stónehenge, has me in his power,—he can do as he pleases,—in fact, he forced me to marry his daughter.’

“ ‘Why?’ said I: ‘does he know you stole the child?’

“ ‘Worse than that,’ said he, ‘he by chance obtained possession of a paper which would hang me if brought into a criminal court.’

“ ‘What's on it—is it a forgery, or what?’

“ ‘No, it's not a forgery, but I would willingly give five thousand pounds for that paper. I know that Stonehenge has it; and I know not the moment, if I attempt to prevent

his doing what he likes with the property, that he may use it and hang me.'

" 'Do you think?' I asked after a moment's thought, 'there is any way of getting possession of that paper?'

" 'Yes,' he replied with a grim smile, 'you might by choking that rascally attorney.'

" 'Thank you,' said I, 'you want me to get my neck into the same noose—no, no blood letting for me.'

" 'I had no such meaning,' said James Tregannon, 'I will tell you how you might probably get this document. I have given you the order on Stonehenge for six thousand pounds—you will have an interview with him—you will be alone with him: let the interview take place late in the evening; threaten to take his life if he does not deliver up to you the paper he holds. If you get that paper, I will give you four thousand pounds more, making ten thousand pounds altogether.'

"I began to consider over this proposal, for there was great risk and danger in it; still it was possible it might be done; but how was I to get paid the four thousand pounds? This question I asked him—

" 'Do not you see,' he observed, 'that if you possess this paper, you hold my life in your hands; once that document is out of Stonehenge's possession, his power over me ceases; he dares not make public his knowledge that I stole the child, he has no proof whatever of my having committed the act, he will therefore not criminate himself.'

" 'Well,' said I, not at all convinced, 'we shall see. Suppose I do get the document you speak of, where shall I hear of you, and how get paid for delivering it up to you?'

" 'Come over to Paris; here is my address.' He gave me a card, which unfortunately, as it turned out, I lost; 'and we shall soon arrange matters; my wife has jewels to double that amount. At all events, see what you can do, and write to me.'

"And thus we parted.

"Shortly after this, I went into Cornwall, and adopted a miner's dress, went down Polgolwin mine, and staid three or four days with the men. I knew I should be safe there for weeks. I then paid a visit to the attorney Stonehenge; he received me in the library; I went purposely at a late hour, and frightened him not a little. After some shuffling,

he promised to give me the money I was entitled to, and I agreed to come at an appointed time to receive it. The hour was ten at night; I wished to make sure of the money before I tried any experiments about the document James Tregannon wanted, though I felt some curiosity about it. I was aware that he had some way of getting into Tregannon house—for, though he did not tell me, I knew from his drunken wife that the very night of the Baronet's death he had entered the house."

Claude here paused for a moment, and looked into the serious features of Sir Charles Treacastle.

"I fear," he observed, in a tone of great emotion, "that my suspicions will be confirmed—that that unnatural wretch, in some unaccountable manner, murdered my unfortunate father."

"Good God! Claude, it looks very like it; but, go on—we shall get at the truth by-and-bye."

Our hero, with a deep sigh, continued—

"It was a wild, stormy night, the one appointed for my meeting with the attorney Stonehenge, but I reached the house, drenched to the skin, and was admitted by his man into the library. The attorney was waiting for me, and, after a few words, unlocked an iron chest, and took out the amount he was to give me in notes—Bank of England notes. As he stood looking into the iron chest, settling some papers, I came suddenly behind him, and seized him by the throat—he could not utter a sound—he was like a child in my grasp, as I held him tight enough to prevent his crying out, yet not sufficiently so to prevent his breathing. I happened to cast my eyes into the iron casket and upon the contents within, the lamp threw a strong light—a folded letter lay on the top—and I read on it—'A document relating to James Tregannon—found July the 11th, 178—.' It struck me at once that this was the very paper I required—the date was as near as possible to the time. Laying down the knife I had drawn to frighten Stonehenge, I took up the paper—I saw the attorney's eyes, glaring and starting from his head, and he shook all over as if struck with the palsy. I whispered in his ear, as I placed him in his chair—

"'I will release you, but utter a cry, or a sound above your breath, and you die.'

"Relaxing my hold, the miserable attorney fell back in his chair, gasping for breath, but completely cowed. I rose up, fastened the door, then filled him out a glass of wine, and handing it to him, said—

" 'You need not tremble—if this is the paper I seek I will neither harm nor rob you of aught else.'

"He drank the wine, for his lips were glued together, and he was fearfully pale—but I saw clearly enough that there was no danger of his giving the alarm—he was crushed—annihilated. I then took the paper, and was breaking the seal, when he called out—

" 'Stay one moment; if you are doing this for gold, hear me.'

"I paused, with my hand on the seal.

" 'Well,' said I, 'what have you to say?'

"He breathed hard, but, at last, said, shaking with anxiety—

" 'Do you know the contents of that letter? on your soul, speak the truth.'

" 'I do not,' said I.

"His eyes flashed with excitement, as, rising, he laid his trembling hand on my arm, saying—

" 'Name the sum you will take, and give me back that letter without reading it.'

"Now this I was determined not to do, for I always keep faith, till faith was broken with me; but I paused, saying—

" 'Why, how is this—this paper is valuable to you as well as to my worthy friend, the Baronet. I have sworn to give it to him, and I must keep faith—its contents cannot injure you.'

"Stonehenge trembled with rage.

" 'Look you here,' said he, and turning suddenly round, he advanced to the table, and opening a case on it, to my surprise, took out a brace of pistols, and standing behind the great library table, with a face fearfully pale, and holding them towards my head, said—'Now, villain, drop that paper and be gone—if you do not, let the consequences be what they may, I'll blow your brains out.'

"I burst out into a laugh, for I never dreamed of the little attorney's plucking up courage to handle so deadly a weapon, and putting the document into my pocket, was

rising from my chair, when, either purposely, or from agitation, or nervousness, I think the latter, he pulled the triggers of both pistols. I had a narrow escape of it—one of the balls took the skin from the side of my head, the other went crash into a large mirror at my back. I stood, for a moment, astounded, and Stonehenge staggered back, dropping the pistols.

“ ‘Well, said I, “you have made a mess of it—but pluck up your courage, I will not betray you—you have alarmed the house—say it was an accident in showing me the pistols.’

“I unlocked the door, just as his man John came rushing along the passage, followed by some of the other servants.’

“Stonehenge gasped for breath, but stammered out—

“ ‘It’s an accident—there’s not much harm done.’

“As he was speaking these words, his youngest daughter rushed wildly into the room, pale as death; she cast a look of abhorrence at me, and then ran to her father, saying—

“ ‘Good God, father, has this man then attempted your life?’

“ ‘Ho, ho,’ thought I to myself, ‘this girl seems to know more than she ought.’

“Before her father could reply, so completely shaken was he, I took up my hat, and looking his daughter steadily in the face, said—

“You have strange ideas, miss—your worthy father was going to give me those pistols to look at, but not knowing much about such things, and they being incautiously cocked, he pulled the triggers by accident; you, see, miss, it was me that was nearly killed by the accident,’ wiping, as I spoke, a stream of blood from my head. ‘There is no harm done, so I wish you good night. Come, John;’ and I laid my hand on that individual; ‘show me the way out—it is late.’

“John started as if shot, looked at his master, who was wiping his forehead with his handkerchief, utterly unable to speak. No sooner was I outside the house, than I made the best of my way to my retreat, and took the earliest opportunity of opening the letter, inside which was a crumpled piece of paper, carefully folded. This I spread out before me, and read the few lines it contained on one

side, and the letter on the other; and thus I understood the whole at once, and so will you when you get the document; for I will not put its contents on paper.'

Claude Tregannon again paused, and looked at his brother-in-law with an expression of intense disappointment.

"Read on, Claude—read on," said Sir Charles, greatly interested, "all this is very strange; you will find he gives some direction to his brother where to get this document, or else the Colonel, having read it, has placed it elsewhere. It must contain most important matter; but read on, I am quite impatient.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CLAUDE resumed reading without answering Sir Charles:—

"Having now possession of this important document, I resolved to place it in a safe place till I heard from James Tregannon, for I had no notion of going to France then, and it was very doubtful to me if a letter would ever reach him. Still I determined, as he had paid me the six thousand pounds, and so far kept faith, that Stonehenge should never again hold this document, I therefore determined to conceal it, where he, if he ever came to this country, would find it, or I myself could get it again, for it was not a document to carry about me. I therefore enclosed it in a flat tin case, and proceeded to the cave, placed the tin case in a hole where no water could reach it, and exactly over the hole, which is not easily seen, I cut, with a chisel, a deep cross in the rock; I then prepared to start for America."

"You must go, Claude, this very night," hastily interrupted Sir Charles Treacastle, "and search for that hiding-place. God grant that the Colonel does not get there before you."

"I will," replied Claude; "but the Colonel is before me, depend on it. Let me proceed with my reading—

"I have already told you," continued George Thornback, "all about my passage and shipwreck. What you have now to do, William, is this, should anything happen to me in this affair. If Claude Tregannon is captured, go

to that young girl to whom he is attached; her uncle will freely pay five thousand pounds for his release."

"Now there is another thing comes into my mind at this moment, which, I think, you may, if I fall, make something of. When I met James Tregannon at Charmouth, amongst other things, he said to me—'Do you know Stonehenge says that the estate of Pentoven ('Ah,' exclaimed Sir Charles) held by Sir Charles Treacastle, in right of his wife—is also mine—if I think right to claim it; for Stonehenge says it was never properly made over to Lady Treacastle, only by a simple form, and that it became mine on my succeeding to the Tregannon estate; but that considering it only worth about fourteen or fifteen hundred a-year, it was better not to make a stir about it. Therefore, it remains in their hands. While residing in the mine, I heard that this estate is now worth ten thousand a-year, and more. If so, you can make a good thing of it, if you can either find out James Tregannon or frighten Sir Charles, who, I dare say, thinks he is all right.'"

"Confound the scoundrel!" interrupted Sir Charles. "Why, the ruffian thought I would probably bribe him to keep this secret."

"I have nothing more to relate, William," continued Claude, "except the marks by which you may discover this cave. James Tregannon owes me fairly four thousand pounds for that document. I treated that boy cruelly, and perhaps if he had not struck me, and cast me to the earth like a dog, I might—no matter. Do you, William, make the best of these communications, should we never meet again."

After this followed a long and minute description of the cave and the vicinity, which it is needless to repeat.

"Well," said Sir Charles, "so far this is very satisfactory. We must hand this over to Paulet; but first let Saunders read it. It is convincing enough, in my opinion, though one scarcely knows what lawyers require. You must be off to-night, but on no account visit that cave without a strong party, because this rascally Colonel, concluding that the pocket-book fell into your hands, and that you would search the cave, might get there before you, and perhaps league with some other rascals to do you mischief. So take care."

"I will take Treestrail and half-a-dozen of the farm-servants, but I trust I may reach the place before him."

That night he left London. On reaching Tregannon, and visiting the cave with Mr. Treestrail and half-a-dozen stout farm-servants, he easily found the mark of the cross, and also the hole, and to his great joy he discovered the tin case, but was doomed to be again baffled, for on opening it, he pulled forth a slip of paper, and on it he read, with vexation, the following words:—

"Remember, you struck me and killed my brother. I swore then to be revenged, and the day will come when my oath will be fulfilled. Till then remember

"WILLIAM THORNBACK."

Sir Charles Trecastle was amazingly disappointed at the result of this journey.

"That villain is as bad, if not worse, than his brother. You must be careful," he exclaimed.

"I sail in two days, my dear sir, and I trust before I return that that impostor will be either caught, or have to fly the kingdom. I feel greatly annoyed," he continued, "about the Pentoven estate; for, depend upon it, if William Thornback can communicate with James Tregannon, he will claim it."

"Pooh, never mind, my dear boy," said the good-humoured Sir Charles; "there is no doubt whatever of your claims being established. I have seen my friend Paulet, and his opinion is decidedly in your favour. Mind you, he never had any doubt of your birth, but, as he said before, to disturb or dispute a succession is a difficult and tedious affair; and, with the proofs we now possess, both Saunders and Paulet are confident of your success. By-the-bye, dear Claude," added Sir Charles, in rather a hesitating manner, "I was speaking to Saunders about your Aunt Bond's property, which you know will be yours. Now here—"

"Stay, my dear sir," interrupted Claude, with a smile, and laying his hand on his brother-in-law's arm; "you want to anticipate the law. Julia ought to have told you that I positively insisted that there should be no change of property, either now or hereafter. or interference with any-

thing she possessed. If I recover my birthright, what on earth can I desire more?"

"But, my dear boy, you must not upset the law in this romantic kind of way," said Sir Charles, good-humouredly. "Your aunt's property went to the next of kin, male of course, but in default of male heirs, to the female branch—thus Julia would have succeeded to the property, had not James Tregannon become heir-at-law. Now this property remains unclaimed. Stonehenge put in no claims for James Tregannon, strange to say, and there it lies accumulating. Now, as it will come to you in the end, you must allow me to advance you a few thousands, so that you may appear—"

"But, my dear sir," interrupted Claude, laughing, "you forget that I am commander of the 'Surinam.' What on earth am I to do with a thousand pounds! I have more than I want till I return; we will talk all about money matters then; now I wish to say a few words about dear Mary. My friend, Frederick Delaware, spoke to me in confidence the other day; he has become warmly attached to Mary, whose beauty and sweetness of disposition have made a powerful impression on his heart. He is as generous and as high-principled a young man as any in the land, and I hope to interest you in his favour. Next to my own union with Fanny, there is nothing I so ardently wish as that of Mary's with Frederick Delaware. I do not speak of fortune—that is a secondary consideration; but he has a noble property, and if it pleases God that I succeed in regaining Tregannon, Mary shall not want a fortune equal to her beauty and worth."

"I am delighted at this," said Sir Charles Treastle; "I knew his father well; the son is a handsome, noble-minded fellow, by Jove! After all, it's not half as selfish a world as people imagine it. Why, the other day, your friend Delaware said to me, 'Excuse me, Sir Charles, for interfering in Claude's affairs, while he has you at his elbow; but you are a family man, I am not; I have lots of spare cash, and if a few thousands are wanted to carry out his suit, it's ready at a moment's warning. You see, Claude, he knew what a queer fellow you are in pecuniary matters; therefore he came to offer the money to me—not you.'"

"I know him well, Sir Charles, and am delighted that you like him."

"Yes," returned Sir Charles, with a smile, "and what's better, so does little Mary; and if he does not make her strike her colours before you come back, I'm no prophet."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

BEFORE proceeding any further with the adventures of our hero, and before we quit the shores of merry England, to traverse the wide waters of the Atlantic, we must give our readers some account of the proceedings of Mr. Stonehenge and family previous to his absconding with the fifty thousand pounds.

Mr. Stonehenge's object, once he became, to a certain extent, Master of Tregannon, was to throw every possible obstacle in the way of James Tregannon's residing in England. He therefore made no attempt to buy off the constable Trelawny's evidence, though in reality he received an anonymous letter, in which it was cautiously offered to sink the whole affair of the Leeds burglary, for a sum of two thousand pounds.

The attorney wrote a reply, but stated that if he could lay his hands on the writer, he would make him pay for his libellous insinuation against Sir James Tregannon.

He constantly corresponded with his son-in-law and his daughter. By their letters he learned that they lived in great splendour in Paris, and that Sir James, always of republican principles, had joined a club where the infamous Santerre and the Marquis of St. Suruges were his most intimate companions; that, in fact, he had finally renounced his country and title, and was become one of the most furious republicans in Paris.

It was at this period that he came secretly to England, to induce Stonehenge to raise fifty thousand pounds on the property, which he wished to invest in France. This was a proposal quite against the attorney's wishes, for it would cripple the property. He therefore said it was a difficult loan to negotiate, but he would communicate with him.

The first visit of Black George to Mr. Stonehenge

frightened the attorney exceedingly. The second, when he possessed himself of the important document, which he thought he held so securely, nearly caused him to lose his senses.

After his departure, and the servants had retired, Mrs. Stonehenge being ill in bed, the father and daughter were left alone. Mr. Stonehenge lay reclining back in his chair, pale and ghastly, with his hands clasped together, and his eyes fixed upon the spot where his terrible visitor had so lately stood.

Rosa loved her father much; she was a gentle, amiable, and handsome girl. And throwing herself on her knees, she took his cold, trembling hand in hers, saying, with tears in her eyes—

“Father, dear father! quit this fatal mansion—give up to the rightful owner this——”

“Great God! what do you mean, girl?” exclaimed Mr. Stonehenge, roused from his abstraction by the strange words of his daughter. “Are you mad—what do you mean?”

“Alas, alas! dear father,” replied Rosa, rising and standing before him, her face pale, it is true, but her words clear and distinct, “I myself have committed a great error, still I was induced to do so from an ardent desire to save your soul, as well as your——”

“You will drive me mad, girl!” interrupted the father; “say at once what you are hinting at.”

“Well then, father,” said Rosa, unshrinkingly, “I overheard every word that passed between you and that fearful man you call Black George, the first night he came here.”

Mr. Stonehenge’s face grew livid with rage, but before giving way to his passion, he paused to think; and knowing his daughter’s character and disposition well, he resolved to use artifice to deceive his child. Mastering his rage and fear, he, after a moment, composed his features, and, holding out his hand, took that of his daughter, and made her sit beside him.

“My child,” said the hypocrite, “you have done wrong—that you have acknowledged; and I will say no more, till you tell me what induced you to play the spy upon your father; I will then prove to you that I was this very night

trying to undo the evil that has been committed. Mind you! I knew not, till the other evening, the full extent of the—the—error," he could not say crime, "that has been committed!"

"Dear father," replied Rosa, "it occurred simply thus:—You know I never believed the late Baronet's son was drowned. It perpetually dwelt in my mind, that he was still in existence, and probably would be brought up to a life of degradation and sorrow by the wretches that stole him."

"Romantic nonsense!" sharply muttered Mr. Stonehenge.

But Rosa continued calmly—

"The other evening, or rather night, I was returning from the housekeeper's room, with something my mother required, when I overheard the insolent and violent words used by the man, who persisted on seeing you; as John conducted him through the lower hall, I had a clear view of him, and an unaccountable desire took possession of me to hear what the man could want at that hour of the night—for a captain of a mine, I was convinced, he was not—I could not resist the wish; so taking the jelly to my mother's chamber, I returned, and placed myself at the private door leading into this study. It was open, and only a silk curtain, as you know, was between me and this room; I therefore heard all."

"Conquering the vexation he felt, Mr. Stonehenge inwardly cursed his stupidity in not locking his private door, from which there was a communication with the library. After a pause of a few moments, he said—

"As you heard all that passed, Rosa, you must have learned, that though I knew the heir was stolen, yet I thought the child had perished by the upsetting of the boat, as James Tregannon stated. I certainly committed a great error in permitting my daughter to marry the Baronet, knowing him to be guilty of various crimes; but alas! my child," continued the attorney with a sigh, a very hypocritical sigh, "the desire of aggrandizing my family, and the hope that James Tregannon would reform, blinded me to the consequences. And when that man came to-night," (the attorney was sure he was not overheard the second night of Black George's visit, for the door of his

chamber was locked), "I was resolved to know what became of the unfortunate boy, and to see about doing something for him; for unless you wish to see your unfortunate father hung or transported, great caution and time will be required to set things to rights. I cannot leave my daughter to starve, or deprive your mother and yourself of every means of support."

"God forbid, father!" said Rosa earnestly, and a little frightened, "all I wish is, that you may recover your former peace of mind, for—I have long perceived that you are far from happy."

"I must have time," interrupted Mr. Stonehenge; "I will secure what property I have, try and place your sister and her husband beyond the reach of the law and poverty, and we will then quit this country for America; but, Rosa, promise me faithfully, that not one word of what you know passes your lips to any human being."

Poor Rosa readily made the promise, but entreated her father to rescue the stolen heir from the clutches of that terrible man Black George, and plan it so that, upon their departure from England, he might recover his rights.

Mr. Stonehenge after this disclosure, and his last interview with George Thornback, came to the resolution to get out of England as soon as he could do so conveniently; that is, when he could contrive to abscond with the largest possible sum he could raise or get together. He had just discovered that the Pentoven property was held by Lady Trecastle, without any positive legal claim, and that James Tregannon, as heir at law, could claim it. Some time after this, he discovered that the heir of Tregannon was actually under the roof of his own aunt, and that his uncle and several eminent lawyers were about to enter a suit at law against James Tregannon. The attorney was fearfully alarmed. Black George he knew had sailed for America; had he betrayed him and James Tregannon! But as time rolled on he discovered that Mr. Bond was forced, for want of sufficient proof, to abandon his intended law suit. To his daughter he communicated this intelligence, and that there was no doubt but that Mr. Bond, having given his own home to Claude Tregannon, would leave him his entire property; and the kind-hearted girl was rejoiced that the poor boy was saved from shame and destitution, and would,

eventually, her father positively asserted, regain his name and estates.

Having at length found a party to advance the loan of fifty thousand pounds, with the further security—as the estate of Tregannon was strictly entailed—of insuring James Tregannon's life, the interest and premium to be paid out of the estate, which was to be made over to the lenders till the debt was paid, he set to, in downright earnest, to complete his plans. All the necessary papers were executed, signed, &c. &c., and Mr. Stonehenge, having sent on his family to Liverpool, finally managed, as related, to escape to America with the money, writing a letter to James Tregannon, telling him as a compensation for his loss, that all he had to do was to lay claim to the estate of Pentoven, which was at that period worth more than sixty thousand pounds, and advising him to apply to an attorney he mentioned, a man notoriously addicted to all cases of chicanery and fraud, for assistance.

Contrary winds forced the ship in which he sailed into the Cove of Cork, and a succession of gales delayed her there. So great was his terror at this delay, that Rosa suspected, from his incoherent expressions, that she had been the dupe of her father's artifice, and she determined to write to Mr. Bond's lawyer; she would not bring her father's life into peril, but she would free the kind-hearted uncle and aunt from all doubt.

Mr. Stonehenge and family reached New York; thence he went to —, and previous to purchasing a property in French Canada, placed the whole of his funds in an apparently prosperous bank, which failed three weeks afterwards, leaving Mr. Stonehenge a pauper in a strange land.

The event broke his heart, and after six months' real suffering he died, leaving his widow and daughter without the means of subsistence; but for that noble-hearted, energetic girl, Mrs. Stonehenge would have followed her misguided husband to the grave, but Rosa's spirit was not to be crushed by misfortune; the wretched father confessed all before his death; even the contents of the crumpled paper were told to the horror-stricken Rosa, who felt thankful that the cursed gold, the cause of all the misery of her family, was gone. Henceforth she would live by her own exertions, and the moment she had the means, she resolved

to return to England, and terrible as it would be to her, she would obey her father's dying wish, and disclose all she knew of the past; a full narrative of the facts drawn up by her and signed by her father, was forwarded to England, directed to Mr. Saunders, but this document unfortunately never reached its destination, the ship being captured by a French cruiser.

Rosa Stonehenge opened a school in Philadelphia, and in a very short time, so well did she conduct herself, that she was able to live in comparative comfort; and there we leave her and return to England.

CHAPTER XXIX.

SIXTY years ago it was not possible to behold a more beautiful specimen of naval architecture than the *Surinam*; she was universally allowed to be the handsomest East Indiaman on the waters; it required a critical eye to distinguish her from a vessel of war. The government offered a large sum for her, having some time before purchased nine East India ships, and armed them with twenty-eight long eighteen-pounders; one of the nine, the *Glatton*,* under the command of Captain Trollope, a few months afterwards actually engaged and put to flight a whole squadron of French ships, one of which, the *Brutus*, was four hundred tons larger than the *Glatton*.

The *Surinam* having to perform a long and dangerous voyage alone, was strong-handed, having one hundred and twenty-seven men, independently of officers; and had, besides passengers, a most valuable freight; she carried twenty long eight-pounders, and four cannonades carrying sixty-eight pound balls.

It was strongly suspected that the revolutionary government of France had despatched Rear-Admiral Sercey with a noble fleet of ships to attack our Indian possessions, and capture the British and other East-Indian ships; therefore nothing was spared or neglected in fitting out the *Surinam*.

On the 28th of October, 179—, this noble ship left the

* The *Glatton* had twenty-eight carronades of sixty-eight pounds on her lower deck besides.

Downs with a favourable breeze from the east, and under a press of sail ran down Channel, and soon gained the broader waters of the Bay of Biscay.

The parting of our hero from his sister Mary and Sir Charles Treacastle, and Fanny from her kind and affectionate uncle, was, as might be expected, painful to all; still they parted with the full hope of again meeting in a few months.

There was a very pleasant party on board the Surinam; Colonel Denbigh, his lady, and two very charming girls, his daughters; Mrs. Salford, with her son and daughter, both grown up, the son going out as a cadet; a widow lady, with two young children; and three officers of the —— regiment, then at Calcutta, young men of good family and gentlemanly appearance. The eldest of the three, Captain Herbert Fitzmaurice, was a young man of extremely lively and convivial disposition. Thus, with a noble ship and a fine crew, there was every prospect of a pleasant voyage.

Our hero's extreme youth at first astonished all the passengers, who wondered at so young a man being the commander of an Indiaman; but Claude Tregannon soon won all their confidence, from his kind and unassuming manners, and the evident attention he paid to all the observations of the first mate, Mr. Burton, in working the ship, first to the Downs, and afterwards in sailing down Channel; but before our hero had been a month on board the Surinam, he was fully competent, from his previous knowledge of navigation and the working of ships, to carry her, with very little instruction, to the end of her voyage.

Colonel Denbigh, a gentleman of high family and exceedingly agreeable manners, about five-and-forty or fifty years of age, soon perceived that there was a motive in Claude Tregannon's going out as commander of the Surinam, for his conversation fully convinced him that though captain of the vessel, he was not by profession a sailor, though evidently a skilful, thoughtful, and courageous seaman. Before the first month was over, the vessel encountered a tremendous gale, dead against her, with a furious and breaking sea. The tempest lasted for nearly seven days, during which Claude Tregannon, by his cool courage and judicious management, not only won golden opinions from all the passengers, especially the female portion of

them, but elicited the rough, but genuine admiration of the thorough old salt, Mr. Burton, his first mate. Nothing unusual occurred during the voyage. After the gale, pleasant weather followed, and the good ship, without straining a rope yarn, arrived within three days' sail of the mouth of the Ganges, when the breeze lulled and a dead calm followed.

Our young commander, on going on deck, just as the sun rose above the mighty deep, observed to Mr. Burton—

"Is it not rather unusual so dead a calm in these latitudes at this season?"

"Light and baffling winds do often occur here," returned Mr. Burton; "but there's a slight air coming up from the west, and, by Jove, I think I see the topsails of a large ship rising in the same direction."

Just then a man in the main-top sung out—

"A sail, ho—"

"I should not be surprised," said our hero, "if it turns out to be one of Admiral Sercey's squadron. The brig we spoke yesterday positively asserted that they were cruising within two days' sail of the mouth of the Ganges, and the captain advised us to keep a sharp look-out."

"We shall make this fellow out in a very short time," said Mr. Burton, taking his glass and going aloft.

Claude Tregannon stood watching the rising sails of the ship—for ship she was soon made out to be. In a few moments he was joined both by Mr. Burton and the second mate, Mr. Seabright.

"I can make the vessel out to be a frigate or corvette," said Mr. Burton; "and she brings up a fine breeze."

"It's well to be prepared," said our hero, "should she turn out to be part of Sercey's squadron. There is, you know, a corvette named the *Regénérée* in his squadron, and, as we were told, a remarkably fast sailer; this may be she," and taking a memorandum-book from his pocket, he ran over a few leaves. "Ah! look here, Mr. Burton, I took down the names that French barque gave us in return for the assistance we rendered them—corvette, *Regénérée*, twenty long twelve-pounders, a hundred and sixty-five men, seven hundred and fifteen tons, the fastest and handsomest ship in the squadron; the *Mutiné*, brig corvette; there is also a thirty-six gun *uerée*,

forty-four gun frigate *Le Forte*, and several others. So let us not be caught sleeping. If necessary, we can stand a shot or so with the corvette *Regénérée*”

All hands were roused, and soon became actively engaged preparing for an enemy, should the advancing ship prove one.

The ship's courses were now visible, and as the sails of the *Surinam* began to fill with a fine breeze from the southwest, she was put upon her course for the mouth of the Ganges. They were then, by their reckoning, having passed the Island of Ceylon, though they had not seen it, within fifteen leagues of the great Andaman Island.

Watching closely the movements of the stranger, they perceived that as they increased their sail, she did the same. Now they could distinctly make her out to be a remarkably beautiful corvette, and had no doubt whatever but that she was a French ship of war, from the cut of her sails, etc.

By this time the sun was high up, and the breeze steady; the preparations for action had roused the passengers. The first upon deck were Fanny Fleetwood and Madame D'Arblay; they had heard the rumour from their attendant Hannah, that there were some apprehensions that they were pursued by a French vessel, and Fanny's anxious heart beat somewhat faster as she thought of the probable consequences of an action with a ship of war — for though the *Surinam* carried guns and an able crew, an action with a full-armed ship was rather alarming.

Claude was by her side in a moment; he saw she looked a little pale, and with a gay smile he said, pressing her little hand,—

“So this alarm of a strange ship, Fanny, has deprived you of your usual slumbers, and banished some of the roses from your cheeks.”

“Ah,” said Fanny, casting a look at the advancing ship—a noble sight, for she was covered from deck to truck with a cloud of canvas. “I always admired a ship under full sail; but I confess, at this moment, I would rather see the pagodas of Calcutta. Are you sure that it is a French ship, and if it is,” and she looked anxiously into his face, with her sweet loving eyes, “what will you do, dear Claude?”

As she spoke, a cloud of smoke burst from the bows of the strange ship, and then the loud boom of a cannon pealed over the deep.

"Ha!" exclaimed Fanny, "there is no doubt of it now."

And she looked up into her lover's face without evincing any sign of fear.

"Ah, *mon Dieu*," said Madame D'Arblay, with a shudder, "there will be a fight, I fear, for that ship sails faster than we do."

"We have a heavy cargo," said Claude, "or that would not be the case. He has, no doubt, hoisted his colours, but we cannot see them, the wind being direct aft. And now, my love," whispered our hero, to Fanny, "you had better go below."

As he spoke, Colonel Denbigh and Lieutenant Forester came on deck, and also the Colonel's two daughters, who at once joined Fanny.

"I hear we are chased by the tricolour," said the Colonel, addressing our hero, "I see she will be soon within gunshot. She must be a deuced fast craft."

"In this light wind, Colonel, she has decidedly the advantage. Ha! I can make out her colours now, she has altered her position a little, and there you may see, with the glass, the banner of revolutionary France."

"By Jove, there it is, sure enough!" said the Colonel, after a look through the glass, "this is awkward; but I suppose, Captain," he added, anxiously, "we must try our metal with our old enemies, for I plainly see we cannot outsail her."

"It is my duty," said Claude Tregannon, "to avoid an encounter as long as I can, on account of both cargo and passengers; but if we cannot avoid it, and I feel satisfied with this breeze we cannot, we must show our foes that the British ensign, even from the peak of an East Indiaman, is to be respected and dreaded. I am not all alarmed for the result; we have a fine, high-spirited crew, four heavy cannonades, that I think will astonish them, and we are twice their tonnage; so I beg you, Colonel, to take the ladies below, and re-assure them." And turning to the Misses Denbigh, who, pale and frightened, had approached close to the speakers, he said with a gay smile: "You must not be alarmed, dear ladies, if we make a little noise before dinner."

more than usual, but I trust not sufficient to spoil your appetites."

Another gun from the French corvette—the ball striking the water within a few yards of the stern, and actually dashing the spray over the taffrail, sent the two Misses Denbigh, with a cry of alarm, into the cabin.

Fanny Fleetwood, so far from turning pale, or showing signs of fear, with a flush on her cheek, advanced with a steady step, and holding out her hand to her lover, said,—

"Of course we are useless lumber, and must get out of the way. God bless you, Claude," she continued, in a firm, clear voice, "I know you will do your duty."

With a look of devoted affection, he kissed her hand, and led her to the companion stairs, saying,—

"Be of good heart, my beloved, with God's help we shall beat this corvette off."

All now became eager and excited on board the Surinam; to escape by sailing was out of the question, therefore Claude gladly followed the secret desire of his own heart, and that was to fight the stranger. In a moment the studding sails were all in, the courses brailed and furled, and the Surinam brought up on the starboard tack, with the English ensign floating out steadily and cheerily in the breeze. The water was remarkably smooth, and the breeze quite sufficient to work the ship.

This sudden manœuvre of the Surinam seemed to startle the crew of the French corvette, and before they had time either to recover from their astonishment, or take in their cloud of canvas, the Surinam was kept away a point or two, and two of the long sixty-eight-pound cannonades brought to bear upon her, and fired. The unexpected discharge of such unusually heavy metal on board an East India ship, perfectly confounded the Frenchman, as they crashed through his rigging, and brought down his main topmast, with the whole of its lumber of sails, top-gallant-mast, and rigging. Nevertheless, he fired a broadside into the Surinam as she went in stays, which did no damage, except cutting away a couple of topsail sheets, and badly wounding the mizen topmast.

The Surinam, now on her larboard tack, and the crew of the French corvette having partly cleared away her lumber, and brought the ship on a wind, returned the

Surinam's fire, with her long eight-pounders, and thus for twenty minutes, a rapid and sharp cannonade was exchanged. As yet only three men were hurt on board the Indianman, when one of the heavy cannonades, pointed by Claude himself, who left the working of the ship in the hands of the experienced Mr. Burton, who handled her splendidly, brought down the fore-topmast of the corvette. A loud and hearty cheer—a British cheer—pealed over the deep. The next moment the four heavy guns having been brought on the one side, were discharged into the corvette, at a distance of scarcely three hundred yards, creating terrible havoc amongst the spars, and leaving her so completely crippled that she lay motionless, and entirely at the mercy of the Surinam to rake her.

Just then the Surinam came close up, intending to cross her stern and give her a broadside, previous to which Claude Tregannon, with a speaking trumpet in his hand, sprung upon the bulwarks, and hailing the ship, called to her to surrender, or he would rake her. This the Frenchman replied to by a volley of musketry, which, strange to say, passed by our hero, leaving him untouched, but wounding several of the men who were looking out over the side. The next moment the Surinam's broadside was poured in upon the encumbered deck of the corvette with deadly effect, and the captain being killed by the last discharge, the tricolour was hauled down, and the splendid corvette, the *Regénérée*, surrendered, after a short but sharp conflict of forty-five minutes.

As the tricolour fell a loud cheer rose from the Surinam's crew, and Colonel Denbigh, and all the officers on board, who remained on deck the whole time, heartily shook hands with their young commander, and the worthy Mr. Burton, complimenting them on the victory they had so gallantly gained; but Claude Tregannon saw only the sweet face of Fanny Fleetwood standing close to the companion stairs, leaning on the arm of Hannah, with her eyes fixed upon him, and the tears rolling down her cheeks. She had witnessed his act of hailing the corvette, had stood, though her heart beat wildly, as the Frenchman aimed a volley of musketry at her lover, some of the balls even piercing the boom above her head, and knocking splinters out of it, and even when the thunder of the Surinam's

broadside shook the ship, still the devoted girl stood unmoved. Seeing — thinking — of nothing but him she idolised.

CHAPTER XXX.

ON the 24th of March, 17—, the Surinam, with her prize, the corvette, under jury masts, was sailing up the broad Ganges, with the City of Calcutta before her.

We do not intend to inflict on our readers any description of Indian people, or the buildings and curiosities of Calcutta. We have books of voyages and travels over every known and unknown land under the sun. Ladies and gentlemen traverse the globe for mere amusement; in fact, a voyage round the world, by a curious and adventurous lady, is quite a bagatelle at the present day. Therefore, any of our readers feeling any curiosity concerning Calcutta and its motly and strange inhabitants, will find abundant materials for satisfying their curiosity in the literature of the day.

We shall merely say, that the Surinam and her prize came to an anchor in the usual ground for East-Indiamen, and that, in a few hours, all the passengers were landed, after taking a most warm and friendly leave of their handsome commander.

Fanny Fleetwood's deep anxiety about her father's health was relieved before the vessel came to an anchor. Ere she could sail up the one hundred miles of the noble, though dirty yellow river into the Hoogly, her arrival in the river was known in Calcutta, and a boat, with a gay awning, and a dozen rowers, belonging to Mr. Fleetwood, met them many miles before they reached their anchorage, and rejoiced Fanny's heart with the intelligence that her father was very much better, though unable to leave his mansion to meet her.

Fanny and Madame D'Arblay therefore proceeded at once to her father's magnificent mansion; our hero promising to visit Mr. Fleetwood the following day. There were formalities to go through; and his prize, which excited considerable curiosity and admiration, had also to be visited by the authorities, and the officers and men disposed off.

It was most gratifying to his feelings to know that his

reception by Mr. Fleetwood would be of a kind most reassuring—for scarcely had Fanny arrived at her father's residence, than a messenger was dispatched with a letter, written by her, but dictated by Mr. Fleetwood himself. It was all the most sanguine lover could wish—Mr. Fleetwood insisting that as soon as he possibly could leave his ship he should take up his abode in his house—Fanny, in a post-script adding—that her father had been positively ordered by his physicians to return to Europe, as nothing but his native air could prolong his life. This was delightful intelligence.

Accordingly, the following day, having satisfied the authorities, and gone through some tedious forms respecting his prize, he was able to leave the rest of the duty to be performed by Mr. Burton and the second mate, and set out in a palanquin sent for him to visit Mr. Fleetwood, who resided on one side of the noble Chandrine road, which consists of splendid palaces on both sides. At sunset, this road becomes the resort of all the aristocracy of Calcutta, and, like the Prado of Madrid, or the Corso at Naples, the Lungo D'arno in Florence, is crowded by gay equipages, with stuck-up Baboos, a Rajah or too, followed by a multitude of attendants, and ladies and gentlemen, of European origin, mounted on beautiful horses.

Claude Tregannon would much rather have walked than be cooped up in a palanquin, but quietly conforming to the custom of the country, he arrived at Mr. Fleetwood's mansion, somewhat astonished and amused at the strange sights he had witnessed on the way.

Mr. Fleetwood was at this period about sixty-three; he was much taller than his brother—somewhat pale, thin, and yellow—yet his features were very handsome, and his figure gave evidence that, though weak from long illness, he must in his youth, have possessed considerable dignity and gracefulness. Claude was greatly pleased with his manner and bearing; while Mr. Fleetwood himself was forcibly attracted by the appearance of his child's preserver, and his simple, prepossessing manners. A suite of chambers was prepared for him, attendants placed at his disposal, and Mr. Fleetwood himself, before the expiration of three weeks, placed his daughter's hand in that of the overjoyed young man, saying—

“ The only wish of my heart was that I might live to again behold my daughter, and that I might find the person upon whom she had bestowed her heart worthy of her. My wishes are fulfilled—I feel proud of her choice—you preserved her young life, and she has loved you ever since with an affection not to be surpassed. You have told me candidly how you are situated, and that in reality you have as yet no name to give my child. Even if such was really the case—but I know it is not so—so confident do I feel, from all I have heard, and now judge from what I have seen—for after fifty years’ intercourse with the world, I fancy I can read most human hearts—that I would bestow my child’s hand upon you, assured that her happiness was secured by a union with one, I thank God, who possesses a noble and virtuous mind, one who will cherish in his heart and soul the treasure I bestow upon him. I talk not of wealth, for I think I have read your heart, and the love of gold has no place there, but this I will say, should you fail in establishing your claim, I will, if God spares me, at once make a will leaving you and my child all I possess, on the condition of your taking my name; and though only a British merchant, the name of Fleetwood may rank with the best in the land for honour and probity.”

This noble and generous conduct of Mr. Fleetwood affected our hero exceedingly; his mind was relieved from all anxiety, and in the society of Fanny and her father time fled rapidly. But Mr. Fleetwood’s physicians urged him to hasten his departure; and as all his affairs in the east had been previously settled, he himself was extremely anxious to return to Europe; the homeward-bound ships would not be able to sail for more than two months, and the Surinam could not be ready sooner. It was therefore resolved to return to England in the corvette *Claude Tregannon* had captured—the information he had received concerning the corvette, was only partially correct—it did not belong to Admiral Sercey’s squadron, but had only sailed in company with them—she was a private corvette, and had two hundred men on board; was splendidly fitted out, and built expressly for speed, had taken several prizes, and had a very large amount of specie; she was therefore a valuable capture, and the crew of the Surinam would share a considerable sum. Mr. Fleetwood having purchased the corvette, she

was re-masted and fully repaired, and selecting fifty men from the Surinam, the vessel, re-christened, and named *The Water Witch*, was soon ready for sea, Mr. Seabright returning as first mate, while Mr. Burton remained to command the Indiaman. Thus in nine weeks after his arrival in Calcutta, Claude Tregannon sailed from thence, as commander of the *Water Witch*, with a picked crew of fifty men, and carrying ten guns, long twelve-pounders, instead of eight, with one of the heaviest pivot-guns yet mounted.

The *Water Witch* got under weigh with a favourable breeze, and having cleared the Mouths of the Ganges, bore away for England, keeping close along the coast of Ceylon in order to avoid the French cruisers. Off the Island they were spoken to by an English frigate, who thought she had a prize from the build of the corvette. From her they learned that Admiral Sercey's fleet, after a severe action with the *Arrogant* and *Victorious*, had sailed for the Isle Du Roi in the Archipelago of Margui, and that the English ships were gone to Madras; therefore all danger from Admiral Sercey's fleet was at an end. Claude Tregannon then steered direct for the Cape, where they arrived without adventure, all parties in high spirits, Mr. Fleetwood already much better, and Fanny as happy as her affectionate heart could wish.

Passionately fond of the sea, Claude delighted in the beautiful vessel he had taken and then commanded; her sailing, armed as she then was, was remarkable, and her qualities undeniable as a sea-boat, having been well tried in some severe gales after losing sight of Ceylon, and also in passing through the Mozambique Channel, where they had encountered tremendous squalls.

After ten days' pleasant delay at the Cape, the *Water Witch* again put to sea, with several homeward-bound merchantmen; but such was her speed, that long before night, not one sail was to be seen upon the vast expanse of water, through which the little vessel was ploughing her way, with a spanking breeze upon her quarter.

"How fortunate we are, dear Claude!" said Fanny, some days after leaving the Cape, as she walked the deck leaning on her lover's arm; for the sea, excepting the tremendous long roll that always exists in those latitudes, was perfectly smooth. "Thank God, this voyage even seems

to restore my kind father. He breathes freer, and his appetite is better."

"He is looking much brighter and better everyway, dearest," said Claude, "and, no doubt, the bracing air of his native land will give him increased vigour."

"How long, with this wind, if it holds, Claude, will it take us to reach St. Helena, as my father wishes to stop a few days there? He benefitted wonderfully by the fortnight we spent at the Cape; it breaks the length of the voyage to him. As to me, I should make a capital sailor's wife, dear Claude—provided I was to be first mate," she added, with her sunny smile.

"I'm afraid, Fanny, replied her lover, "unless, as you say, you could be first mate of your husband's ship, he would be very apt to make few voyages. The breeze freshens, and if so, I dare say we shall be able to see Diana's Peak before sunset on Thursday."

It was not, however, till early on Saturday morning that the high peak of Diana, in the Island of St. Helena, was seen rising out of the wide waste of waters, like a spire. After a week's repose in James's Town, which Mr. Fleetwood greatly enjoyed, they were again under weigh, and, without accident or adventure, arrived in the early part of October within sight of the Spanish coast.

Our hero then considered it best to keep well away for the coast of Ireland, in order to avoid meeting any of the French vessels of war cruising in the Bay of Biscay; but the wind blowing strong from the north-east, with a heavy sea, forced them in nearer the French coast than he wished, and rendered him rather anxious. For thirty-six hours they were obliged to lie to; and as the gale ceased, though still blowing strong, thick, hazy weather ensued.

"We must keep a very sharp look-out," said our hero to Mr. Seabright. "We are in very awkward ground, with this northerly wind and haze—two things that do not often come together."

"When they do, sir," said Mr. Seabright, shaking himself clear of a considerable amount of moisture, "they usually precede some heavy gale from another quarter. I wish it would clear, for we may get rather too near to some of Johnny Crapaud's cruisers."

The next day the wind veered a little, and before night

they could just lay their course, the weather still foggy and the sea troubled. Just an hour before sunset, with a shift of wind to the westward, the fog suddenly dispersed, and right in their course they beheld three large ships, not more than a league from them, standing towards the French coast, under single-reefed topsails.

The corvette was evidently perceived at the same moment by the strange ships, for the smallest vessel of the three immediately tacked, and then hoisted her top-gallant sails over their reefed top-sails. Thus she would be enabled to pass across their bows, if they stood in as they were then standing. Fanny and Madame d'Arblay had just left the deck to join Mr. Fleetwood at tea, and our hero resolved not to alarm them, when perhaps, after all, the strangers might be British vessels.

But Mr. Seabright, having carefully examined them through his glass, pronounced them to be two large French frigates and a corvette.

"This is awkward, Mr. Seabright," observed Claude; "we must keep away a little, and not let that craft pass within hail. They may mistake us easily enough for a French corvette, and we can show them the tri-colour; but should they hoist signals, we shall have to make a run—it will not do to show fight with two large frigates in sight."

"The dusk will favour us, sir," said Mr. Seabright, "and during the night we can easily get away from them. There is no moon, and the sky is overcast."

The crew of the Water Witch were anxiously watching the corvette, which seemed to sail remarkably fast. Just then the two frigates tacked, and stood after the corvette.

The sun had set, and the breeze was unfortunately lulling. The French corvette was within a mile of them, and, without tacking, she could not get any nearer, for the Water Witch was gradually edging off the wind. The Frenchman evidently perceived this, for, firing a gun, she hoisted her colours.

"The tri-colour, as I said," remarked Mr. Seabright, and one of the crew having the French flag ready, the next moment it flew out from the peak.

Immediately a signal was hoisted by the enemy, and though Claude Tregannon was quite ignorant of its meaning, another was hoisted in return, hoping that the increas-

ing haze and faint light of the evening might mystify the enemy with respect to the flags. Everything was ready on board the *Water Witch* to set additional canvas, and make a run of it, for the two frigates sailed faster than the corvette. The Frenchman evidently were not satisfied with our hero's code of signals, for another gun, shotted, was fired, and then one of the frigates signalled the corvette.

"We must square away before the wind, sir," said Mr. Seabright; "it won't do; they are right in our course. If we run for about four hours, and then lower away everything, they will pass us in the night; it will be a very dark one."

In a moment the *Water Witch* was put before the wind, and covered over with every stitch of canvas she could carry.

Bang! went one of the frigate's long eighteen-pounders, which roused Fanny Fleetwood and the party below. Fanny was on deck in a moment.

"What is the firing for, Claude?" she most anxiously demanded; but before he could well reply, her quick eye rested on the three ships, though they were then seen but indistinctly in the fading twilight.

"You have caught me running away, Fanny," said our hero, with a gay smile to hide his uneasiness; "you see we have got too close to some of the French cruisers during the fog."

"I trust in God you will outsail them," she anxiously exclaimed. "It would be dreadful to fall into the hands of the French—ah me! and we so near home."

"You must not be desponding, my beloved," replied Claude; "we are outsailing that vessel rapidly—in half-an-hour she will be out of sight—and during the night we will alter our course, and, please God, see old England after to-morrow."

Fanny continued above with Madame D'Arblay, walking, and earnestly conversing with her lover till none of the French ships were visible from the deck, and then, somewhat reassured, descended to the cabin—no light was shown on board the *Water Witch*; but, unfortunately, the wind, about the beginning of the second watch, died away, and a stark calm ensued. It was intensely dark, and very overcast, with a heavy swell from the nor'-west quarter.

"This is very unfortunate," said Mr. Seabright, "for

this last half-hour I have been fancying I can make out a light astern of us—if so, it must be the corvette—the wind holding on with her longer than it did with us.”

Our hero looked astern, and after a few moments, perceived the light, and turning his night glass upon it, regarded it steadily.

“I greatly fear that is the corvette,” he remarked, “making a night signal to one of the frigates. It does not advance, therefore she is now becalmed as well as ourselves. No doubt she will be within gun-shot of our pivot-gun in the morning, and if she is, we must try and cripple her before the frigate comes up; then, if the wind rises, which no doubt it will with the sun, we will try our speed with the frigate.”

“We can do that very well, sir,” answered Mr. Seabright; “but if the calm continues, the frigates will send their boats, and it’s not possible, with our few hands, to successfully resist them.”

“It’s scarcely possible it will last a calm like this with such a sky,” said our young Commander; “and at this time of the year.”

“Well, I should think not, sir,” returned the old seaman; “but there’s no knowing; had you not better turn in for a couple of hours, sir, it will give you fresh vigour.”

“No,” said Claude, “I feel no want of sleep; in fact, I am too anxious; you thorough seamen can sleep under all circumstances—I am only a young hand, and cannot command sleep; had I no one on board, and the consequences were only to be endured by ourselves, I should think lightly of our situation—but captivity and its hardships would kill Mr. Fleetwood, and, perhaps, break his daughter’s heart; such events would be worse than five thousand deaths to me.”

“God forbid, sir, that such a catastrophe should occur!” said Mr. Seabright, earnestly. “We are certainly in a ticklish situation; still many things may occur to get us out of it—a good breeze of wind for one. Perhaps we may see some of our British cruizers with the daylight—there must be some of them off the French coast on the look out.”

With the very first break of dawn, the calm still continuing, all the crew of the *Water Witch* were on deck, eagerly

looking out, for the thought of a French prison had nothing very agreeable in it. There was a thin, grey haze upon the surface of the ocean, but, above it, the tall spars and sails of the French corvette were plainly visible—she was within range of the Water Witch's pivot carronade, though infinitely too heavy metal for such a ship as the Water Witch to carry for actual service.

Still our hero, having witnessed the terrible havoc performed by the heavy guns in the Surinam, determined, before leaving Calcutta, to have one heavy gun fitted into the Water Witch as a pivot-gun. He now resolved to make use of it in crippling the French corvette, before she could bring any of her guns to bear upon them. Mr Seabright considered her to be an eighteen-gun corvette, fitted with twelve-pounders; if so, with her compliment of men, she was too weighty an antagonist to encounter at close quarters.

On the sun's rising, the fog lifted, and the sky began to wear a most threatening aspect—as yet not a breath of air was stirring—but they perceived that the corvette was creeping up, with her three boats a-head towing her—and three miles astern was one of the frigates; the other was nearly hull down.

The moment the corvette could bring her broadside to bear, she opened fire upon the Water Witch, evidently to try her range, but the balls fell very short.

"Ah! mounscer," exclaimed one of the crew of the Water Witch, patting the breech of the swivel, "you want to play bowls, do you? well, here's a dose for you that will spoil your bowling."

The Water Witch was brought round with some difficulty, and the gun pointed, aim taken by Mr. Seabright, and the match applied. Our hero, having half-an-hour before gone below, and communicated to the ladies and Mr. Fleetwood, through Hannah, who was up and dressed, not to be alarmed, as he was going to try his heavy gun upon the French corvette. This intelligence roused them all up at once. The gun was no sooner fired than all hands eagerly watched the effect. It was elevated so as to damage the spars of the corvette. The elevation, however, was not sufficient, or else the distance was greater than supposed, for the ball struck the water within a few yards of the boats

towing, covering them with spray, and actually bounding from the water clear over them, striking the corvette in the bows, smashing and tearing away the starboard cat-heads, and doing considerable mischief. The astonishment of the Frenchmen was great—in a moment they ceased towing, and got on board as fast as they could. Just then several cats' paws of wind fell upon the water—the nearest frigate got the breeze first, then the corvette; it was a fresh breeze, and she came bowling along with it, though not a breath, at that time, filled the sails of the *Water Witch*. Just at this instant the gun was again ready, and our hero took a steady aim at the corvette's masts. The next moment the match was applied, and a loud cheer told the result. Down came the corvette's fore-top-mast with all its gear, and a few minutes afterwards the *Water Witch* was dashing away through the sparkling sea under a strong breeze at south-west.

Fanny, leaning on the arm of her father, was now on deck.

"I see, Claude," said Mr. Fleetwood, "you are learning to become a thorough seaman rapidly—you have spoiled that corvette's speed for some hours, at all events. If we do not find the frigate too fast for us, all will be well; some of those French vessels sail remarkably fast."

"At all events," remarked our hero, in a serious tone, "that one seems to go along very fast."

Fanny looked up into her lover's face, as she let her soft, fair hand rest on his.

"You have been up all night, dear Claude; do come below and take some breakfast, Madame is waiting for us."

"Well, I will go and make a hasty meal, so as to be ready for anything; but as long as the wind holds, there is very little to fear."

So saying, he and his anxious bethrothed descended to the cabin.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE morning meal, usually so cheerful, was rapidly consumed, and almost in silence, though our young Commander, rousing himself, said all he could to reassure Fanny

and Madame D'Arblay, Mr. Fleetwood also speaking cheerfully and hopefully. Having made a hasty breakfast, our hero again hurried on deck. It was blowing much stronger, and a heavy thunder-storm appeared to be brewing to the eastward, and coming up against the wind; altogether, as Mr. Seabright said, "there was nothing very pleasant in the aspect of the weather, and the frigate was carrying on with a vengeance."

The corvette was still following, and with his glass our hero could perceive they were working with might and main, getting up a spare topmast.

"We must get our craft upon a wind, sir, said Mr. Seabright, "or the frigate will overhaul us. She is a powerful ship, dead before the wind."

"I have been thinking so these last few minutes," answered Claude; "but if we do, we shall have to pass within shot of the corvette, who you see has altered her course, and we cannot get on the other tack, for we should then be cut off by the sternmost frigate.

"It's not easy to out-manceuvre three such customers," observed Mr. Seabright, going forward to watch for a favourable moment for reducing their canvas and getting their vessel upon a wind.

This in less than ten minutes was effected, and all was secure; they then felt the full force of the gale, which caused the *Water Witch*, under her topsails and courses, to heel over, so as nearly to bury her guns in the sea. They watched the frigate anxiously; the next moment she shot majestically into the wind, reducing her enormous mass of canvas like magic; and taking in her top-gallant sails, lowered the masts at the same time.

"By Jove!" exclaimed our hero, "she's strong handed, and skilfully worked; now comes the critical moment, for we shall pass within less than musket-shot of the corvette, though there is not much to apprehend from her guns in this tumble of a sea."

On a wind, the *Water Witch* was a most splendid sailer; she was evidently leaving the frigate, who did not—although a very fast craft—appear to carry her canvas steadily. Being prepared to exchange broadsides with the corvette, *en passant*, all hands stood anxiously watching the moment they came within range. Just

then a tremendous peal of thunder roared over the deep. The next instant the gale lulled, and another peal, that seemed like the crash of a thousand pieces of artillery, burst over their heads, and, like magic, the gale suddenly ceased, not even a breath of air remained, leaving the *Water Witch* rolling heavily in the trough of the sea. In the pause between the stunning peals of thunder and the vivid flashes of lightning, almost blinding them, the French corvette, then within range, opened fire upon the *Water Witch*, though she rolled terribly herself. The ladies were utterly confounded by the terrific violence of the storm, but Claude Tregannon was neither dissipated nor deprived of his presence of mind. Naturally quick and energetic, the greater the danger he felt himself involved in, the more his spirit and determination increased. Though not expecting to do much mischief in the then agitated state of the sea, he nevertheless poured a broadside into the corvette, after hoisting the flag of Old England. But heaven's artillery soon silenced the feeble imitation of man; and so terrible became the increasing lightning, and so repeated and awful the crashes of thunder, that both crews paused and looked around with some degree of awe. In a few minutes Mr. Seabright's voice was heard calling, with a loud voice, "Furl top-sails—and brail the main-sail! for here comes the squall. It struck the French corvette first. Sheets and tacks were let fly in a moment; and away flew the sails, split into ribbons. On came the corvette, buried in a mass of foaming water. The crew of the *Water Witch* had just time to furl their main-sail, when the squall reached them. Unfortunately her position was not so favourable for receiving the force of the tempest; as the hurricane came from eastward, she heeled over with the fury of the blast, her top-sails split, and, before she could recover the shock and be made to answer the helm, the French ship ran right into them, with a tremendous crash.

A scene of awful confusion ensued. Even amidst the horrors of the storm, a furious, though short, hand to hand conflict took place. Locked together, their bulwarks shattered, both their top-masts broke off at the caps, the French crew, more than one hundred in number, leaped, cutlass and pistol in hand, on board the doomed *Water Witch*. Though only fifty in all, the crew and their young captain

fought with a gallantry and desperation that staggered the Frenchmen. The second lieutenant of the corvette, with a savage oath, urged on his crew, and leaping on board himself, discharged his pistol at Claude Tregannon. He missed his aim, and his intended victim ran him through with his cutlass. Still numbers poured in on them; sometimes the tremendous crashing of the two entangled vessels throwing the combatants off their legs, while the shouts, curses, and cries of the enraged Frenchmen were drowned and smothered by the continued peals of thunder bursting over them. Forced by numbers to retreat, our hero still fought inch by inch, till the first lieutenant of the corvette, throwing himself on board with a fresh body of men, forced the crew of the *Water Witch* down below.

Overpowered by the pressure of the enemy, Claude was driven down the companion stairs; as he descended, he felt the arm of the anxious Fanny thrown round his neck, as if to shield him from a shower of blows aimed at him by his enraged and furious assailants.

"Merciful heavens! Claude," she exclaimed, trembling with the excitement she felt, "you are bleeding."

"It is nothing, my beloved," exclaimed our hero, in a voice of intense bitterness, "but that squall has lost us the ship."

Madame D'Arblay, though fearfully alarmed, said—

"They will not injure me. I shall be set free, and I will say Fanny is my daughter."

"Ha!" exclaimed Mr. Fleetwood, "that is a good notion. Hush, here they come; beware, my child, show no interest in me—God will shield us yet."

As he spoke, an officer, followed by several armed sailors, descended the cabin stairs and entered the saloon. He was a tall, handsome man, about seven or eight-and-twenty; he halted when he perceived the ladies, and politely removed his hat, saying, as he looked with some surprise at Claude Tregannon, who stood leaning on his sword by the side of Mr. Fleetwood—

"You, I presume, monsieur, are the commander of this vessel, which I find is not a ship of war."

"Such is the case, monsieur," returned our hero; "that sudden hurricane placed us in your power." As he spoke, he handed his sword to the Frenchman, who bowed, and

turning to his men, desired them to leave the cabin. "I trust," continued Claude, "that these ladies, who are your countrywomen, will be kindly treated."

The lieutenant looked surprised, but at once replied—

"If they were not French, sir, their sex would secure their instant protection, but as countrywomen they will be set free. May I request, madame, your name. Strange to say, your features are familiar to me, though years must have passed since I beheld them?"

"Ernestine D'Arblay, monsieur," answered the surprised madame.

"What!" exclaimed the Frenchman, with a start of astonishment. "The Countess D'Arblay, wife of Jean Philibert D'Arblay?"

Before she could reply, a loud voice from above hailed the lieutenant, saying—

"A signal, sir, from the frigate—three large ships, British men-of-war, coming up from the eastward."

"Ha," cried the Frenchman, with a start; and turning to Claude Tregannon and Mr. Fleetwood, "these ladies will receive every attention. Will you, gentlemen, please to follow me."

Remonstrance was useless; neither did our hero or Mr. Fleetwood like to betray any great emotion; but poor Fanny burst into a flood of tears, as she held out her hands, one to her father, the other to her lover. The Frenchman hastened on deck. Claspings his beloved in his arms, and pressing a kiss upon her lips, Claude bounded up the stairs, slowly followed by Mr. Fleetwood.

Claude Tregannon, not seeing any of his own crew upon the deck, stood anxiously waiting till the lieutenant gave his orders. He perceived that the *Water Witch* and the French corvette were hove to within a couple of hundred yards of each other. The thunder still roared in the distance—the terrific fury of the squall had ceased, and a strong east wind prevailed. Within three miles were the two French frigates under close-reefed topsails, and at about double that distance could be distinguished two large ships standing towards them, under topsails alone, close-reefed.

"I am ordered," said the officer who had charge of the *Water Witch*, "to send all the prisoners on board the cor-

vette, and to make sail with this vessel, which I find is private property. Allow me to say, sir, it astonishes me that you so gallantly attempted to defend yourself with such a force surrounding you. I am happy to tell you, however, that except a few severe cutlass and pistol wounds, your men are comparatively well off. Your second shot killed four of our men. By the fall of the topmast we lost two others, and several were severely wounded in boarding you, which, I am sorry to say, has greatly enraged our captain. Pardon me if I give you a little advice, for somehow you have interested me much. I tell you, in confidence, I am nephew to the Countess D'Arblay, and I know that the beautiful girl below cannot be her daughter. Nay, monsieur, you need not be alarmed, I will not betray her. I can guess her motive for passing off this young lady as her daughter, and, depend on it, it will answer. Her husband is a person of consequence, at this moment—he has been many years in prison. Pardon me, I can say no more now."

As he concluded, a gun was fired from the corvette, and signals hoisted. Our hero was surprised and perplexed at the Frenchman's communication; he was perfectly aware that to any one previously acquainted with Madame D'Arblay, it would be impossible to pass off Fanny as her daughter, as it was not more than fourteen years since she had left France, and had then no children.

In a few moments four boats came from the corvette, and two were launched from the *Water Witch*; the crew of the latter were brought up from below, and the wounded were to stay on board. Claude spoke to his men kindly and cheerily, telling them to keep up their spirits, as they would soon be exchanged, and he trusted they would receive good treatment.

They all seemed delighted to see him, and that he was unhurt, and told him not to be uneasy about them—that they had given the *monsieurs* a pretty good dose considering, and had it not happened that they were taken aback by the thunder squall they should have escaped, or even had their crew mustered thirty more men, they would never have taken the *Water Witch* by boarding. In half an hour they were all on board the corvette, only thirty French sailors being left to take the *Water Witch* into Rochefort harbour, one of the finest in France.

Our hero and Mr. Fleetwood were the last to leave the Water Witch, and through the kindness of Lieutenant Laland some portion of their private effects was taken with them, and a brief, very brief parting was allowed, leaving Fanny distracted about her father and lover, whilst madame was bewildered and amazed on hearing that her husband was not only alive, but one of the leaders of the revolutionary army. She contrived to whisper to Claude—

“Be of good heart,—Lieutenant Laland is my nephew, and will aid you if he can; at heart he is a royalist.”

And thus our hero separated from his devoted and distracted betrothed. Mr. Fleetwood, whose health seemed wonderfully restored, bore his misfortune with great resignation; in fact, till Claude’s naturally buoyant disposition rose superior to difficulty, he was the consoler. On reaching the deck of the corvette, Captain Charpentier, a fierce, vulgar-looking man, evidently sprung from the lower orders, advanced to where our hero and Mr. Fleetwood stood, after ascending the side of the corvette.

“Which of you two,” he said, sharply, gazing from one to the other with a rude, fierce look, “commanded that craft yonder? I’ve been told it was you,” he added, fixing his gaze penetratingly on our hero, “though I can scarcely believe that a beardless youth would have had the fool-hardiness to fire upon the flag of regenerated France.”

With a flushed cheek and a look of scorn; Claude Tregannon, forgetting the caution given him by Lieutenant Laland, replied—

“If I am to judge of regenerated France from the specimen before me, she must blush for her regeneration.”

Our hero spoke French well, and his tone of utter contempt, drove the French commander furious. He stamped upon the deck, uttering a volley of oaths, and calling a guard of marines aft, savagely ordered them to take the “*sacre*” Englishman and handcuff him.

Mr. Fleetwood, greatly excited, was about to remonstrate, but Claude Tregannon, placing his hand on his arm, said, entreatingly—

“For God’s sake, my dear sir, let the brute alone; I care very little for his petty revenge.”

Before he could utter a word more, the loud roar of cannon pealed over the deep. It was the foremost English

frigate, the Unicorn, opening fire upon the French frigate, the Tribune.

The commander of the corvette turned round, with an oath, and the marines surrounding Mr. Fleetwood and our hero begged them civilly to go below, their officer saying, kindly—

“You shall be treated well, messieurs.”

It was very evident that the commander of the *Legère* did not much admire the arrival of the two English frigates on the scene of action; for he at once signalled his prize, and made sail for the coast of France. We shall merely mention that the two French ships struck to the English frigates, and that the *Legère*, instead of helping her consorts, made sail for the port of Rochefort.

Lieutenant Laland remained in command of the *Water Witch*, and having repaired damages as well as it was possible in the time, in obedience to orders, though with a feeling of great disgust, bore up after the corvette, leaving the four ships in action. Descending to the cabin, he found his aunt and Miss Fleetwood in a state of great affliction: poor Fanny thought not of herself, but her father's and lover's captivity was a severe blow to her affectionate heart. Lieutenant Laland tried all in his power to diminish the uneasiness of the beautiful girl he was to style cousin. He had seen at a glance—for Frenchmen are quick of perception in affairs of the heart—that the handsome commander of the *Water Witch*, and his aunt's lovely companion, were lovers, and perhaps it was well he did make the discovery; for it was impossible to behold and converse with Fanny Fleetwood for any length of time without being interested and fascinated.

“And now, my dear aunt,” said the Lieutenant, sitting down, “I will, as you must be anxious, give you a very brief account of my uncle's career after his return from India. You are already aware that he was, unfortunately, engaged in a conspiracy to overthrow the government of Louis. He and the other conspirators were, however, premature. A decree of the junior ministers, sanctioned by the King, deprived him of his title and estates; but warned in time, he returned to Poitou, and, collecting as much money as he could, contrived, as you know, to embark for India. After your flight, my mother, who was greatly

affected at the misfortunes of her brother, set out for Paris, to join my father. Years rolled on, and the revolution broke out. My poor father and mother—alas! those are terrible scenes to revert to—perished, with many thousands of innocent victims, without even an hour's warning. I was then serving in a king's ship, and knew not of their fate for two years. The tricolour replaced the ancient banner of France, and army and navy embraced the new order of things.

"It was about three or four years after Monsieur D'Arblay's return from India, that our ship returned to Brest, and I proceeded to Paris. Need I express to you my anguish and despair when I heard the fate of my parents from Monsieur D'Arblay, whom by chance I encountered. From his youth, notwithstanding his ancient descent and rank, he had been a rank revolutionist. Strange that a man of his birth and position should imbibe such principles. Paris was convulsed by various factions, one day elevating a party, the next marching its leaders to the guillotine. I detested the revolutionists of all parties, and, struck with horror at the scenes I witnessed, rejoined my ship, glad, by the bustle and anxiety of a sailor's life, to escape from the bitter recollections of the past; thus I heard nothing more of my uncle for three years, and then only learned, accidentally, that the party he supported was crushed—many of the members executed, and others lingering out life in prison.

"In the month of June, 179—, our ship was refitting at Rochefort; and anxious to make some inquiries after my uncle, in fact, the only relation I possessed in France, I again visited Paris.

"I arrived at a very terrible and eventful period; the Girondists were assembled for the last time, and with them perished all that remained of the virtuous and true in France. To my great joy and surprise, I encountered my uncle, just set at liberty after a long incarceration. He was furiously opposed to the Girondists, whose fall has, I fear, opened a reign of terror far more to be dreaded than that which has passed; to my extreme regret and disgust, I found that Monsieur D'Arblay was associated with Marat, Robespierre, and others equally notorious for their terrible, unscrupulous policy. You are aware that before his mar-

riage he had served with distinction in the army; he was now requested to take the colonelcy of a regiment of dragoons, under the command of General Queteneau, who was proceeding, with a large force, to crush the present insurrection in La Vendée.

"At this very moment he and General Queteneau are actively engaged against those brave and gallant men. Before this I had returned to Rochefort having been first lieutenant to the Legère; our commander I am sorry to say is a tyrant, a low, vulgar brute, and at heart a coward. This, my dear aunt, is a brief recital of events unknown to you, but sufficient to show you how to proceed when we reach Rochefort."

Madame D'Arblay listened to her nephew's short account of her husband's career with a melancholy interest; her union with the Count D'Arblay was not one of the heart—she married him to please her father.

An amiable and strictly virtuous woman, Madame D'Arblay, after her marriage, endeavoured all in her power to love and esteem her husband, but in a very short time found it quite impossible to do either. The district in which the property of the Count was situated was less affected by the silent and imperceptible changes of time probably than any other in the empire of France. To a certain extent the feudal system existed, therefore the revolutionary principles of the Count D'Arblay found no response in the inhabitants of his district; why he, a man of rank and birth, should entertain such principles and ideas was only to be accounted for by those who knew him.

The estates of his family had been at one time considerable, but he himself possessed but a moderate fortune. The estates adjoining had belonged to his grandfather, but for some cause or other—suspected treason, it was said—they became forfeited to the crown, and a few years after were bestowed by Louis XVI. upon the Marquis De Langbrie: the Count D'Arblay earnestly, if not fiercely, demanded justice of the king, offering to show proof that his grandfather was wrongfully accused, but Louis was not to be dictated to, and the Count received notice to avoid his majesty's presence. This rankled in the heart of Philibert D'Arblay, and was one of the causes of his hatred to all the royal family.

Madame D'Arblay, in speaking of her early life to her pupil, whom she loved with all the fondness of a parent, had simply styled herself Madame D'Arblay; she never spoke of her former rank in society, and indeed never expected to either hear more of her husband, or again to set foot on her native soil. The intelligence therefore communicated to her by her nephew caused her much emotion and much thought. Though her affection for her husband was only a feeling of moral duty, she considered the tie one too sacred to be thought lightly of; that he had neglected her she felt was too true; but that was no rule for her to be guided by—she therefore made up her mind the moment they reached port to write or send messengers to him, announcing her arrival in France, and her wish to rejoin him. By doing so, she also hoped through his means or influence to obtain the liberty of Mr. Fleetwood and Claude Tregannon, or at least be able to get them released at the first exchange of prisoners between the two countries; as to her beloved pupil, she fully expected to be able to restore her to her country and friends with little difficulty. All these thoughts and wishes she communicated to Fanny, who suffered exceedingly in mind; her only thought was the misery her father and lover must endure in a French prison, and the weary length of time that might elapse before they could possibly be released.

In the meantime the captured *Water Witch* followed the corvette, and favoured by a steady breeze, made the Island of Oleron, where they anchored for a night, whence the corvette made for Rochill, while the *Water Witch* was ordered to Rochefort.

Lieutenant Laland, while the two vessels remained at anchor under the Island of Oleron, communicated to Captain Charpentier, that the ladies captured in the *Water Witch* were French, and no less than the wife and daughter of Colonel D'Arblay, who commanded a regiment under General Quetenau, and who were returning from India, having embarked in the *Water Witch*, intending to reach France after landing in England; they therefore requested permission to land at Rochefort.

"Very well," observed the commander, "let them be taken before the authorities when you arrive; they will

settle the matter as they think fit. The prisoners will be sent on to Doué."

Accordingly, Madame D'Arblay and her supposed daughter were landed, with their effects, and Lieutenant Laland managed so well that he had them comfortably established in the best hotel in the place, without any examination of even their luggage—the name of D'Arblay being sufficient to satisfy the authorities; for it was well known in Rochefort, that Colonel D'Arblay was advancing with his regiment to strengthen the garrison of that town, and the people were in terrible dread of the revolutionary army.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

FIVE or six days after their arrival at Rochefort, Madame D'Arblay and her charge, somewhat paler than usual, but more resigned in mind, were sitting in the saloon of the hotel. The windows were open, and they were gazing out over the broad waters of the noble harbour of Rochefort and its forest of masts. Several vessels of war were in the outer harbour, and from the peak of all waved the "tricoloured flag of revolutionary France." Madame sighed as she looked on this emblem of dethroned royalty; for like many, even then in France, she loved the ancient order of things. A messenger with letters had been sent to her husband, who was then at L—— with his regiment, and she waited for an answer with trembling impatience.

Lieutenant Laland had left to return to his ship, which was ordered to Brest to join a fleet fitting out there; but he promised his aunt to make inquiries how the prisoners were treated, and let them know full particulars before he sailed from Rochelle.

As Madame and Fanny sat listlessly gazing from the window, the waiter entered with a letter in his hand.

"The messenger is just returned, Madame," he said, "and has brought back this letter."

With a palpitating heart, and a hand somewhat tremulous, Madame D'Arblay took the letter, and as the waiter retired, anxiously broke the seal, and read its contents.

Fanny, with a very serious expression of countenance, watching the varying changes of her features.

The letter of Colonel D'Arblay was as follows:—

“MY DEAR ERNESTINE,

“I need not say how amazingly astonished I was on receiving your letter. As I shall see you in a few days, all explanations in writing are quite unnecessary—I will merely tell you how to act. I have been reinstated in my property of Chateau Bois-Philibert, and have every reason to believe, after the destruction and defeat of these rebellious Vendéans, I shall be put in possession of the estate of the late Marquis de L——, whose son is even now in the ranks of the Vendéans.

“On receipt of this, you had better at once set out for Chateau Bois-Philibert, with your daughter—[these words were marked]. I need not tell you to be cautious, as we halt for some days at D——.

“I shall be able to see you at the chateau, and shall have time to explain all that may now appear strange to you.

“Believe me,

“My dear Ernestine,

“Ever your most affectionate husband,

“JEAN-PHILIBERT D'ARBLAY.”

Madame D'Arblay glanced through the epistle first to herself, and then read it to Fanny. When she had concluded, she said, with a faint smile,—

“There is nothing very loving in this, my dear girl; but still I trust he will, when we meet, exert himself to procure the exchange of those we love, and also be able to plan some method of restoring you to your native land. Bitter as the pang of parting with you will be, still it must take place.”

Fanny threw her arms round the kind-hearted French-woman's neck, and kissed her fondly, saying—

“Yes, it will be a bitter parting from one whom I have always loved as a mother; but, dear Ernestine, I will not leave France till my beloved father and Claude obtain their liberty.”

“Well, dearest, we will do our best; in the mean time

we must set out for the chateau. It is scarcely two days' short journey from this place, and is a very lovely spot. Ah, what recollections will it not recall! I wonder we have not received a letter from my nephew. We go through Rochelle—perhaps we may see or hear of him there."

The next day Madame D'Arblay having hired a lumbering old French chariot to carry them to Rochelle, and procured passports for herself and daughter and one attendant, the faithful Hannah, who still followed their fortunes, set out for the Chateau Bois-Philibert. Though only eighteen or twenty miles, owing to the bad state of the roads at that period, they did not reach Rochelle till late in the day, and heard, to their great disappointment, that the corvette *Le-gère* had sailed some days before at a moment's notice. On cautiously making inquiries as to what had become of the English prisoners taken by the corvette, they learned that they had been sent, under a strong guard, to the Castle of Doué. The inhabitants of Rochelle, it was well known, were inclined to favour the cause of the Vendéans, and open communications with England."

"The prison of Doué," said Madame D'Arblay, "is within five leagues of the Chateau Bois-Philibert, and General Queteneau is advancing, they say, upon Thouars; the whole country will be in a state of insurrection."

Leaving Rochelle early the next day, they hoped to reach the chateau that night; but, on stopping to refresh their horses, they heard that there was a band of Vendéans lying between them and the Chateau Bois-Philibert—that a battle had been fought the day before, and three hundred republicans had been slain.

This intelligence startled the travellers, for such frightful excesses were committed on both sides, that it made them tremble to think they might encounter either of the contending parties.

Towards evening a party of peasants, coming to the auberge to drink, brought the news that the Vendéans were led by Henri de la Rochejaquelin.

"Ah," said Madame D'Arblay, "I know that young man well, though he may not remember me; he is a most enthusiastic royalist, and a great admirer and friend to the English. I would not wonder, should I meet him, but I

could persuade him to attack the prisons of Doué and release the English prisoners. The Vendéans, they say, expect aid from England."

Fanny's cheek flushed when she heard this intelligence, but remarked—

"When he knows that Monsieur D'Arblay is marching at the head of a regiment to crush the insurrection, may he not think it a good ruse to secure the wife of one of the revolutionary leaders?"

"Oh, no; I know enough of Henri de la Rochejaquelin to satisfy me he is far too chivalrous to injure or molest females, whether the wives or daughters of his bitterest enemies. Of course my communication to him, if I can manage an interview, must be secret. I will appoint him to meet us at Saint Morent," said Madame D'Arblay, "a little village five leagues from Chateau Bois-Philibert; there is a very good auberge there where we can pass the night, and thus reach the chateau early to-morrow."

It was a remarkably beautiful evening as the old chariot containing our travellers entered the valley of Saint Morent, through which ran a broad muddy stream. The road was extremely bad, and the bridge across the river had been destroyed the day before by the party of Vendéans, so that the driver of the vehicle, compelled to stop his horses, began rubbing his huge ears, in a state of perplexity how to cross the river.

While he thus stood, and our fair travellers were gazing out from the open window, they perceived two horsemen galloping out from the thick wood on the opposite side of the stream, who, the moment they perceived the carriage, turned their horses' heads towards the river, and rode rapidly into the stream, which, to the postilion's surprise, after all, was fordable in that particular spot. The foremost horseman wore a species of military dress, with high horseman's boots, whilst pistol holsters and a heavy dragoon sabre hung from the belt round his waist. He was a tall, handsome youth—in years, perhaps, two or three-and-twenty.

At a glance, Madame D'Arblay recognised Henri de la Rochejaquelin. This noble and heroic youth, whose career was so brilliant and so brief, rode up to the side of the carriage, and, raising his hat from his head, said—

"Madame D'Arblay, no doubt."

"Yes, Monsieur Henri, I knew you at a glance. I am so rejoiced to meet you," she added, holding out her hand. "And your fighting in the cause of royalty adds to the feeling of pleasure I enjoy in seeing the son of my old and dear friend the Marquis de la Rochejaquelin."

"Alas! my dear madame," observed the young soldier, kissing the hand held out to him, "France is no longer the France of my early remembrance and of yours. A kind of dream comes over me as I look upon you—a dream of the past—I fear I shall never live to see the like realised again. But do not let me keep you here. When I received your note I recollected that we had destroyed the bridge over this stream, and I rode to meet you, and conduct you across this secret ford. I will ride through first; and now, postilion, keep close after me, and hold your horses well up."

They passed through the ford easily and safely, guided by Monsieur de la Rochejaquelin, who then continued by the side of the carriage, conversing upon the state of affairs in La Vendee, and other parts of the country where the insurrection was making rapid progress.

"I can pass half-an-hour this evening with you, my dear madame," said the young soldier, "but I must first ride on to Saint Luce. I shall be at Saint Morent nearly as soon as you will in that heavy carriage, and over such bad roads, and then we will talk over the affair you have at heart."

And shaking hands with madame, with a low salutation, and a look of respectful admiration at Miss Fleetwood, Henri de la Rochejaquelin rode on with his attendant.

In an hour or two the ladies drew up at the door of the auberge, the "Demi Lune," in Saint Morent. It was a small, retired little hamlet, and the auberge stood apart from the village, in the midst of a very pretty garden. The landlady, Dame Marguerite, with her two pretty daughters, did all they could to make the travellers comfortable; the men of the village were away, some with Monsieur de la Rochejaquelin, others with a celebrated leader of the Vendéans, named Charette.

The whole country between Nantes and Rochelle, a

space of nearly a hundred miles, at that time was only to be traversed along cross roads leading to hamlets and villages, the land parcelled into a multitude of small farms, and tenanted by single families. Great simplicity of manners existed—the peasants followed their chiefs to the chase, and shared their triumphs and successes. Their priests were revered by the simple-minded people, and were truly worthy of their love; they were never burdened with riches, consequently were never exposed to the invidious benevolence great wealth always provokes. All the inhabitants of the hamlets and villages Madame D'Arblay had passed through, from Rochelle to Chateau Bois-Philibert, sent forth their male population to fight under the different chiefs selected to head the insurrection in the Bocage, the Marais, and Le Vendee. Forcing the peasants to take arms drove them furious, and they therefore resolved, as they must fight, they would combat against those who oppressed them.

Madame D'Arblay, when Monsieur de la Rochejaquelein joined them an hour afterwards at the auberge of the Demi Lune, felt no hesitation in giving him a brief history of herself, how she was situated with respect to Fanny, and her great desire that Mr. Fleetwood and Claude Tregannon might be released from the prison of Doué.

La Rochejaquelein was greatly interested, and gallantly declared that he would not rest till he had not only liberated the prisoners but conducted them safely to the nearest seaport where the Vendean arms were triumphant, and enable them to embark for England. In the enthusiasm of the moment, her heart beating with the rapturous thoughts of her father's and lover's freedom, Fanny, with the tears of joy and gratitude in her beautiful eyes, caught the young man's hand in hers, saying,—

“She would never, never forget his generous and noble gallantry; that she trusted God would bless his efforts in fighting for the liberties of his countrymen, and that she would pray with heart and soul for their success.”

Dropping on one knee, the chivalrous Henri kissed the fair and beautiful hand he held, saying,—

“Believe me, fair *demoiselle*, that next to my king and country, your father and lover shall be my dearest care. I will free them, and, with God's blessing, restore them to

their country and to you. Farewell : you shall soon hear of Henri de la Rochejaquelin.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE Chateau Bois-Philibert had, like all French mansions of the preceding century, innumerable chimneys, innumerable doors, and curious pinnacles, with long, formal avenues, bordered with trees, planted at exact distances ; statues on pedestals, fountains, and garden terraces, and small ponds full of fish.

Still, from the nature of the country and situation, the chateau was a pleasant residence ; the hills in the immediate vicinity were lofty and irregular, and well covered with fine timber ; the stream of the Gueret ran within a few perches of the domain, and in one place formed a very pretty lake of nearly four miles in circumference.

The chateau was in excellent repair, and evidently newly furnished : Madame D'Arblay perceived several servants, male and female, were ready to receive her ; but they were strangers to her, and came from Paris. That which pleased madame most was the kind and affectionate greeting she received from numbers of the inhabitants of the little hamlet of Bois-Philibert, who remembered her well, and her kindnesses also.

The appearance of the beautiful Miss Fleetwood, who passed for madame's daughter, puzzled the villagers, that is the old ones, exceedingly. After a few day they shook their heads, and began to express their wonder to each other, saying,—

“ Surely, surely this beautiful girl is more than fourteen years old, or fifteen either ; and I remember well the time our good lady was married.”

However, they were a simple, kind-hearted people, and all their observations ended in,—

“ It's no business of ours : she is a kind, good lady, and we rejoice she is come back ;” but no one said they were glad that Monsieur D'Arblay was restored to his estate.

Madame and Fanny settled themselves in the old chateau, each day anticipating hearing some tidings of Henry de la Rochejaquelin's proceedings, and Madame D'Arblay

expecting a visit from her husband, with a nervous kind of feeling pervading her mind. Several reports reached the chateau of the acts of General Queteneau and Colonel D'Arblay. The latter, with his regiment of cavalry, had attacked and defeated a large body of the insurgents, and gave no quarter, shooting all their prisoners in cold blood. General Queteneau was now within three leagues of Bois Philibert, with a force of nearly eight thousand men, and Colonel D'Arblay was near Doué with his regiment.

This intelligence made Fanny feel extremely miserable; somehow she experienced an unpleasant feeling at the mention of Colonel D'Arblay, that she could not account for, nor was it pleasant to know that there was so large a force in the very vicinity of the prison where her father and lover were confined. Every day, nay every hour, brought in some intelligence to the little hamlet of Bois-Philibert.

It soon became known that the Vendean leader Charette was at the head of nearly twenty thousand men, and had seized upon the Isle of Noirmontiers, that there he might establish his head quarters, and open a communication with England. This intelligence rejoiced Fanny, for if Henri de la Rochejaquelin could break open the strong prison forts of Doue, and release the prisoners, they would easily find safety in the Isle of Noirmontiers. Late one evening, a peasant, in soiled and torn attire, greatly flushed and excited, rode up to the chateau gates, and throwing a letter to the porters, said,—

“For madame! — give it to her immediately,” and springing on his horse rode rapidly away.

Two hours after, a party of cavalry, with two officers at their head, arrived heated, and covered with dust—one of the officers was Colonel D'Arblay. The letter left for madame had been perused; it contained but three lines, hastily written, and on the paper were stains of blood.

It would be scarcely possible to describe the joy and rapture of Fanny, when madame read to her as follows:—

“DEAR MADAME,

“Tell your beautiful *protégée* that Henri de la Rochejaquelin has kept his word; the prison of

Doué no longer exists, the captives are free—in great haste.

“Yours devotedly,

“HENRI DE LA ROCHEJAQUELIN.”

Madame D'Arblay thought for a moment, and then said,—

“If you could be got to the Isle of Noirmontiers you would be perfectly safe with the patriots; and either Henri or Captain Charette would be sure to see you safely embark for England; you will certainly find your father and Claude there, and there will, no doubt, be English vessels off the coast. I wish somehow you were gone before the arrival of my husband.”

“Why, Ernestine, why do you wish that?” asked Fanny, somewhat uneasy, “do you apprehend any obstructions to our project from him?”

“No, my love, I trust not,” said madame, thoughtfully, “we must, however, keep very secret about Henri de la Rochejaquelin meeting us, and all knowledge of the news we have just heard; indeed, it will be much better not to speak about your father and Claude at all.”

While conversing on this subject, and turning over many plans in their heads, one of the servants entered the room, saying,—

“There was a party of cavalry at the gate, and she was sure that Monsieur the Colonel was with them.”

Madame D'Arblay started, and became greatly agitated, while Fanny, pressing her hand, said,—

“I will leave you, dear Ernestine, to meet monsieur alone,” and kissing her pale cheek, she hurried to her own chamber, where she found Hannah sitting sewing, with a very grave and serious look in her usually open and cheerful countenance,—

“You are looking very grave, Hannah,” remarked our heroine, sitting down, “especially after hearing such good news about dear Claude. Have you heard of Colonel D'Arblay's arrival?”

“It's that very thing, my dear,” said Hannah, “that makes me very thoughtful. I guessed who it was when I saw the troop of soldiers ride up to the gate—I wish we were safe out of the Chateau, and that we were with the

rebels; as they call the country people; I'm afraid of this Monsieur D'Arblay."

"Why, what on earth can make you afraid of a person you never saw?" said Fanny, although she inwardly experienced the same feeling.

"Well, indeed! Miss Fanny," said Hannah, putting aside her work: "I'm afraid of him, but not without cause; you know at first I could make nothing out of the language the people speak about these parts, so of course I said little or nothing to them; but being in a measure deprived of the use of my tongue, I made double use of my eyes. You know the fine madame we found installed here as housekeeper, Madame Bonychaps, as she calls herself."

"Bonchamps," said Fanny with a smile.

"Yes, that's her name, Miss Fanny; you see, she keeps the keys of this huge house, and there are a great number of rooms shut up; some days ago when you and Madame were gone for a walk into the hamlet, I amused myself by wandering through the Chateau. I was standing in the recess of a window, and, without her seeing me, this Madame Bonchamps comes sailing along the gallery, and, taking a key from her pocket, opens one of the doors, and goes into the room without closing it; so, being of a rather curious disposition, I thought I would have a look into the room; and putting my face in at the door, to my surprise, I beheld a most magnificently furnished bed-chamber, with costly new furniture, fine mirrors and toilet tables, and all kinds of beautiful things for a grand French lady's toilet. But what struck me most was, Madame Bonchamps, who was packing up, in two great trunks, such fine robes of silk and satin, and several bonnets, and crapes, and satin mantelets; she had her back to me, and was very busy putting these things away, so I had a full opportunity of observing her. Within a yard of the door, I saw lying on the floor a folded letter, as if just dropped; now, my dear Miss Fanny, the sight of all these fine things, which I well knew could never have belonged to Madame D'Arblay, for they were quite new and of the present fashion, made me feel more curiosity; I thought I would even get hold of the letter, and I contrived to do so, and then came away."

"But, my good Hannah," said Fanny, thoughtfully, "you did very wrong; what advantage could the letter be

to you, as you could not read its contents, even if it was right for you to do so."

"Law! Miss Fanny," said Hannah, quite calmly, "you know we are in an enemy's country, and that if you suspect an enemy, it's all fair to find him out if you can, no matter by what means."

"I cannot agree with you there, Hannah. Why should you set down Madame Bonchamps as an enemy? She is very civil and obliging; to be sure, she is not very young, yet the dresses might belong to her, and it might have been her room before we arrived here."

"No, Miss Fanny, the dresses were not hers, and it could not have been her room; for though she is stately and stiff enough in manner, the robes I saw would look very absurd on a woman like our housekeeper. No, depend on it, they were the garments of a person of rank. I could not read the letter, it is true, but I could read Colonel D'Arblay's name at the bottom, and it is addressed to the housekeeper. But I will shew it you, Miss Fanny."

"No Hannah, I would not read it on any account; it would be very wrong to pry into the secrets of any one, let alone those whose hospitality we are experiencing."

"But, my dear Miss," said Hannah, earnestly, "you blame me, without hearing all I have to say; and you may well suppose I would not have acted as I have done but for your sake."

"My dear Hannah, I am certain of that," said Fanny Fleetwood, affectionately, "so let me hear the rest of your story; for, to tell you the truth, a strange feeling of dread has come over me, which I cannot account for, and especially after having heard such good tidings about my dear father and Claude."

"Ah! I know there is something evil coming," said Hannah, "however, you shall hear all I know, and then you can judge for yourself. Having got possession of the letter, and having seen all the fine things in the locked up room, I became anxious to know more—it's so like our sex—Miss Fanny," added Hannah, with a smile. "You must know, that down in the village is an old dame, who remembers Madame D'Arblay's marriage, and has known Monsieur D'Arblay from his childhood. This old dame's husband was a sailor; and in her youth she went with him

a voyage to London—the two countries were at peace then—her husband caught a bad fever and was taken to a hospital, and the ship sailed without them. Her husband, unfortunately, died, and Dame Minchen took a fancy to stay in the country. Some ladies were very kind to her; and being a very good-looking young girl, and very clever, one of them took her into her service, and thus she remained seven years in England, and learned to speak, and read, and write the language. After a variety of adventures, she returned to France, and came down to her native place, and married a farmer, who, dying some four years ago, left her in very comfortable circumstances. I heard Madame D'Arblay one day mention old Dame Minchen, as a very curious and entertaining old woman, who had travelled over many strange lands, and had spent years in England; so I felt a wish to go and see and talk with her, for there was no danger in any of the peasantry here knowing I was an Englishwoman, so I went to see her. You can't think how delighted the old dame was; she kissed me repeatedly, said she loved England, and all belonging to it. Dear me! she speaks English like a native; so, almost every day since, I have gone to sit and chat with Dame Minchen; she speaks most affectionately of Madame D'Arblay, but always shakes her head when I mention the Colonel. I determined to tell Dame Minchen of the things I had seen in the room, and I did so, but she expressed no surprise.

“‘Oh!’ said she, ‘so you found out Madame Bonchamps. Ah! those things you saw were for the grand dame that was coming here from Paris; it was said she was to be married to the Colonel. There was a fine carriage and horses, and men servants; but a few days before Madame’s arrival, the Colonel’s intendant came and sent away the carriages and servants, and a great many other things, and a few female domestics replaced them—they came, I believe, from Nantes. Madame Bonchamps, the housekeeper, however remained, and then the intendant gave out that Madame had returned from India, and that the Colonel thought she was dead many years ago; so I suppose Madame Bonchamps was packing up the lady’s finery when you saw her—I wonder who she was?’”

“I then told Dame Minchen about the letter, and she became as curious as myself; so I gave it to her, and she

read, and told me the contents. The letter told the house-keeper to pack up all the dresses and other things in the rooms, and to keep them carefully locked—that he intended removing Madame as soon as possible—and, above all, to keep a strict watch over the English girl, as she was a prize worth looking after.”

“Good heavens!” what can he mean?” exclaimed Fanny, with a flushed, and then a pale cheek.

“Now you see, miss,” said Hannah, with a self-satisfied look, “I was not so much in the wrong, after all.” When old Dame Minchen read this, she shook her head, and said—

“He is a bad man, and ever was. He married Madame for her money, and it was said that he had another wife somewhere. All his dependents were afraid of him; but he was an uncommon handsome man. You must take care,” continued old Dame Minchen, “of your young mistress; and if you take my advice, you and she will get away out of the chateau before he comes. Dress in a country girl’s garments, and go into the Marais, where you would be quite safe until you could get off in some ship for England; all the peasants and people of that district would help you, and the revolutionary army won’t venture into that country.”

“I suppose, then,” said Fanny, “you told Dame Minchen all about our being taken by the French ship?”

“Oh, yes, Miss Fanny, I told her all about us. No one here takes you for Madame’s daughter; there is no risk with them; they hate in their hearts the new government of France; they love the royal family, and they are fighting for them. Now, Miss Fanny,” continued Hannah, “what do you mean to do? It is time to think, now the Colonel is come. If we delay, it may be too late to escape, as poor Madame will be unable to help us. Ah! if the Vendéans could catch hold of him, they would kill him; they say he is the most cruel and savage of all the French officers, under some general whose name I forget.”

Fanny was bewildered. She would like to have consulted with her beloved friend, and expose her husband’s bad conduct and designs to her. She could hear a good deal of noise and bustle in the chateau, even from their room, which was in a remote wing, it having been selected

for the beautiful view it commanded of the river and lake.

"You had better go and see Madame," said Fanny, "and say I would rather keep to my chamber this evening, and beg her to excuse me. You can bring me my coffee here. Madame, no doubt, will come to see me, after the first bustle and strangeness of her meeting with her husband passes off. Try and learn how many soldiers came with him to the chateau."

"I was just thinking of doing so, Miss Fanny," said Hannah, rising to leave the room. "Lock the door after me, Miss Fanny; I don't like those lawless, revolutionary soldiers."

Fanny took care to do as Hannah advised, and then sat down, plunged in very painful thought. In less than half an hour Hannah returned, bringing lights and a tray with tea and coffee. She looked frightened, and was pale as death. Putting down the tray, she locked the door.

"Oh, Miss Fanny," said the kind and devoted Hannah, "I have shocking news;—there, for God's sake, don't look so pale. What an old fool I am to speak so hastily. You will want all your courage and energy now. There, read that. Poor Madame slipped it into my hand; she looks wretched, but says she will see you by-and-bye."

Fanny took the slip of paper, and going to the lamp, read the few words it contained. They were—

"My beloved child! Rouse all your natural spirit, and make up your mind to fly from this house during the night. The companion my husband has brought with him is Colonel Thornback!"

"Merciful heaven! I'm lost," exclaimed Fanny, falling back into the chair, and dropping the paper. "Colonel Thornback in France—in this chateau!"

Hannah looked as pale as death, saying—

"It's quite true, miss; I saw him myself going into the saloon, where Colonel D'Arblay was supping with another officer. I knew that horrid man at a glance, though he is dressed in a French officer's uniform. I never saw him but twice. The first time, you know, was when I went to see Westminster Abbey with you, miss; and poor,

dear Mr. Claude knocked him down. I afterwards saw him with a very horrid man, examining your good uncle Fleetwood's house. I told you that at the time, but you said you were quite safe from such a bad man, under your uncle's protection; and now, wonderful to think, he is here, and with Madame's husband!"

"How many soldiers are there?" questioned Fanny, anxiously.

"There are fifty dragoons, miss—nearly a score in the chateau, and the rest in the village, and two regiments of infantry within a mile of this, in another village larger than our hamlet!"

"Heavens!" ejaculated poor Fanny, "what shall we do—how escape with this number of soldiers about us? What can that horrid villain, Thornback, be doing in the French army, and with madame's husband?"

"I'm so bewildered, miss," said Hannah, "that I do not know what to advise. We must wait till madame comes. I will pack up a few things in a bundle, at all events, ready to go, if we can."

Fanny felt intensely desirous to see Madame D'Arblay, and also, in her own mind, resolved to attempt to escape into the district of the Marais, or endeavour to get to Noirmontiers. Still she trembled to think of the perils she might have to encounter, passing a district through whose entire length and breadth a cruel and unrelentless war was raging.

The clock of the chateau had tolled the eleventh hour of the night, when a knock was heard at their door. Hannah having unlocked it, Madame D'Arblay entered the room, looking dejected, and miserably pale and haggard. Fanny threw herself into her arms, kissing her cold cheek, wet with tears, with the affection of a child.

"Ah, Ernestine, you look miserable," said Fanny, holding her hand in hers; "this *réunion* with Monsieur D'Arblay has brought no happiness with it."

"Happiness, my child," returned madame; "Oh, no, far from it—I considered it my duty—but now I wish to God I had not written to my husband, but sought refuge for you and myself amongst the royalists. Alas! my child, my husband was never a good man; now I can only consider him a monster of wickedness and crime!"

"Good heavens!" ejaculated our heroine, "he has not surely in so short a period—"

"Liston to me, my love," interrupted madame, "for we have little time to spare; you and Hannah must get out of the chateau to-night. The delay of a day might—God help me, I dare not think what such a delay might bring about. It is three leagues, my poor child, from here to Saint Morent—alas! how will you traverse that distance unprotected and on foot—the fatigue—"

"Nay, talk not of the fatigue, Ernestine; I think nothing of walking three leagues; but how to find the way—and what to do when there!"

"You cannot miss the way, my love, once on the road, which, you know, runs by the chateau gates; but, I recollect, the bridge was broken down when we passed, but there will certainly be a boat there. First, I want to explain to you what to do, for fear of being interrupted; afterwards, I will give you my reasons for your sudden flight. When you get to Saint Morent, go to the little auberge we stopped at; you know how kind Dame Marguerite's daughters were; her two sons are with Henri de la Rochejaquelin; tell her plainly you wish to escape from the power of Colonel D'Arblay, and want to proceed to wherever the force of La Rochejaquelin is stationed. She will at once procure you peasants' clothes and mules, and perhaps a guide, who will take you through a part of the country in which no troops will pursue you. We have plenty of gold, so that will not be wanting. Once you reach the quarters of Henri de la Rochejaquelin you are safe; he will protect you with his life, and, no doubt, restore you to your father and Claude, if they have not escaped to England, which I feel satisfied is not the case, for they would never leave this country till assured of your safety." Madame D'Arblay sighed heavily, and pressing the hand of the attentive Fanny, continued—"And now, my beloved girl, I will tell you the reason of all this.

"When I met my husband, after fourteen or fifteen year's separation, my heart palpitated violently, for you know how strangely and unfeelingly I was deserted. I will say little of our meeting—it was false and heartless on his part. We were alone. The two officers that came with him, he said, were getting accommodation for the

men and horses in the village, but would be back shortly. Having ordered some refreshment and wine, he sat down, and, looking me keenly in the face, said—

“So, Ernestine, you met that boy rebel, La Rochejaquelin!” Swearing a frightful oath, he continued—“I’ll never cease till I hang him on a tree, and massacre every man in his troop!”

“Oh, Fanny, my child, how I trembled, as I looked into the changed and terrible face of my husband. When we parted, he was a tall and very handsome man, and not more than thirty—he is now about forty-five—and his figure of immense proportions—his beard, whiskers, and moustaches almost hide every part of his face; but his dark eyes, ah! they have a fearful power in their glance.

“‘What had you to say or do with this man?’ continued my husband, as he fixed his eyes upon me.

“Alas! I had no spirit left in me—I was cowed; however, I replied—he only showed us a passage across the Morent.

“‘And pray,’ he returned, with a sneer, ‘was it you or your fair friend that induced him to attack Doué, massacre the guards, and release the English prisoners there? Do you know the doom, Ernestine, you have brought upon yourself, if this was known to any of the revolutionary commissioners?’

“Recovering some portion of my spirit, and hurt and indignant at such language and manner, during the first hour of our meeting, I replied, in a tone that expressed my feelings perhaps more than prudence dictated, and our critical situation warranted.

“My husband looked at me a moment seemingly surprised; and then, without a word, helped himself to some wine. Just then there was a knock at the door of the saloon, and the serjeant of the troop entered.

“‘Oh! it’s you, Bontemps,’ said my husband; ‘have you found quarters for the men and horses in the hamlet?’

“‘Yes, with some difficulty, Colonel,’ replied the serjeant. ‘The hamlet is a regular nest of rebels. There’s not a grain of corn to be found, nor an able-bodied man in the village; they must have buried the corn, Colonel.’

“‘Ah!’ returned Monsieur D’Arblay, fiercely, ‘I’ll

teach them a lesson before we go, that they will remember—I will not leave them a roof to cover them. Where's Captain Thornback ?'

"On hearing that name I started up electrified.

" 'Could it be possible?' I thought to myself, repeating that horrid name.

"The sergeant replied, he was coming up from the village with Cornet Bellaire, and then added—

" 'What are we to do without corn, Colonel ?'

" 'Oh, I will tell you what to do,' said my husband, with a fiendish laugh ; 'take two of the elders, since all the young ones are with the rebels, tie them up, and flog them in the face of the whole village till they tell where the corn is hid—for I know there must be abundance somewhere.'

" 'It shall be done this moment, Colonel.'

"And the man was retiring when, horror-struck at the thought of such an act of cruelty being committed, I stepped between the sergeant and the door. The door opened, and an officer in uniform entered the room ; I fell back, and looked up in his face, exclaiming, as I did so, involuntarily—

" 'Good God, Colonel Thornback !' with a low voice ; but a sneer curling his lip, the wretch said : 'Captain Thornback, madame, at your service,' and then in English, though he spoke exceedingly good French, he added, 'I left my title of colonel with my worthy friends in England ; but you look charmingly, madame, I trust your fair friend, Miss Fleetwood, is as beautiful as ever.'

"I was so utterly confounded that I remained incapable of uttering a word, and sunk into a chair ; it seemed to me so incomprehensible to thus meet that bad man, and with my husband.

" 'You seem surprised, Ernestine,' said Monsieur D'Arblay, 'at meeting this gentleman ; but though it may seem strange, it is very easily explained. Captain Thornback served in the French armies on the Rhine years back, and liking our habits and customs better than the American, where he obtained the grade of colonel, he preferred returning to his old rank of captain to going back to America. He will conduct you and Miss Fleetwood to-morrow morning to Thouars, as you cannot possibly stay in this rebel-

lious district. This chateau will be occupied by a cavalry force, and every village and town either harbouring or furnishing rebels with arms or men I will rase to the ground; I will, and must first make an example of this hamlet—not a cottage or house will I leave standing as a refuge for a race of rebellious villains!

“ ‘And is it thus, monsieur,’ I replied bitterly, ‘you treat your unfortunate tenantry, after so many years’ absence from them?’

“ ‘They are no longer mine, madame, I sold the estate, I am happy to say; but even if I had not, my duty to my country, freed, thank God, from a yoke of tyrants, would cause me to act in the same manner as I intend doing now.’

“ ‘Then God help them and unfortunate France, delivered, as you call it, from one tyrant to suffer from the horrors of ten thousand infinitely more cruel.’

“ ‘You are an aristocrat, Ernestine,’ returned my husband, coolly, ‘do not utter such sentiments when at Thouars, or our separation will be eternal.’

“ ‘Would to God we had never met again,’ I exclaimed passionately, as I left the room disgusted and horrified.

A summons at the door caused Madame D’Arblay to cease. It was the housekeeper, Madame Bonchamps, with a curious smile on her face; she dropped a very slight curtsy, saying—

“The Colonel requires your presence immediately, madame.”

Madame D’Arblay sighed, and rose up, saying—

“I will follow you,” but the housekeeper did not stir, so, not wishing to create any observation, she merely said to Miss Fleetwood: “well, my love, you will be ready to-morrow early for your journey; do not be frightened by the soldiers, good night.”

When the door closed upon madame and the housekeeper, Fanny looked with an expression of dismay into the face of Hannah, saying in a low voice—

“Merciful Heaven, what shall we do—how can we get out of this chateau?”

“Keep up your spirits, dear Miss Fanny,” said Hannah, “leave it to me, I will get you out of the house safe

enough ; and as to a walk of nine miles on a fine night, it's nothing ; you have walked more than that often. Look the door after me, I am going down to the servants' hall for half-an-hour ; I shall have arranged every thing by that time."

So saying, the now resolute Hannah left the room, poor Fanny making a great effort to recover her usual spirit and determination.

CHAPTER XXXV.

WE have already stated in our previous narrative how Colonel Thornback visited France during the monarchy, and served in her army on the Rhine, as a volunteer, and, being a man of undoubted courage, received a commission ; but this not answering his purpose, for he was a mere adventurer, after the campaign he returned to France. As he lived entirely upon his wits ; the gaming saloons of Paris, then in their glory, furnished him the means, associating as he did constantly with a gang of swindlers ; here he formed his first acquaintance with Monsieur D'Arblay, who was fast dissipating the fine fortune he had received with his wife. He was then a very handsome man, but licentious and unprincipled, and even before his marriage had formed a connexion with a Madame de T——, a lady somewhat notorious at that period for her beauty, her unscrupulous love of gold, and her reckless principles and extravagance.

However, being suspected, and finally discovered in a dangerous conspiracy, he fled, and sailed for India with his wife, determined to leave her there, and after a time to return to France, feeling quite satisfied that the revolution would break out before his return.

Captain Thornback himself was also obliged to leave Paris, several of his associates having been detected, imprisoned, and condemned to the galleys. He proceeded to Belgium ; but at that period that country was but a poor place for gentlemen of his profession. So taking upon himself the title of Colonel, he sailed for England. We have also stated how he prospered there. Furious at his detection and pursuit by Claude Tregannon, after his escape from St. Giles's Rookery, he hurried into Cornwall,

found the cave and the document his brother had concealed there; and then, though burning to revenge himself and his brother's death, he embarked in a small smack for Jersey. He had no fear whatever in returning to France in its then convulsed state; but reckless in mind and principle, he rather enjoyed the idea of visiting the scene of such acts as horrified all Europe.

From Jersey, therefore, he crossed over, and made his way to Paris; his first object being to find Sir James Tregannon, who he discovered was living in the Faubourg St. Antoine, on great terms of intimacy with Marat, Danton, and Santerre, and one of the fiercest and cruellest members in their club, calling himself simple citizen James Tregannon. Thornback found several of his old associates in Paris, hot and fiery Republicans; he soon joined their club, and thus, in a short time, became enrolled as one of the Mountain. To his surprise, he encountered Monsieur D'Arblay, who had been released from prison, and was working heart and soul to get into power. They renewed their intimacy, and then citizen Thornback, as he styled himself, informed Monsieur D'Arblay that his wife was in England, mentioning the situation she was in, and the family she was residing with.

"Ha," exclaimed Monsieur D'Arblay, "so she got from India. However, it's not very likely she will ever come to France; she considers me dead."

Monsieur D'Arblay had renewed his intimacy with the notorious Madame T——; he had recovered his estate of Chateau Bois-Philibert, and had sent down a housekeeper and furniture, intending it as a retreat for madame, if affairs, in which she was meddling, should turn out unfortunate.

William Thornback wrote a letter to James Tregannon, whose astonishment on receiving it was great; but recollecting George Thornback's history, he at once conjectured the writer was his brother.

It is unnecessary to lengthen our story with a full recital of what passed in the interview between them; it is sufficient to state that James Tregannon acceded to William Thornback's demands, and wrote at once to London. His attorney in London was ordered to claim the Pentoven estate, and arrears of rent, as well as his aunt's

property, he being her nearest male relative; and also to come to terms with Trelawney, the Leeds' constable, at any sacrifice, as he was resolved to proceed to England and face the claimant to the Tregannon estate. Sir James also learned from William Thornback, that Claude Tregannon had sailed for India, and could not be back under twelve months at least; but the document he so much coveted was still in the possession of another, who was not likely to restore it without receiving the stipulated six thousand pounds.

Several months rolled on. Monsieur D'Arblay's party at last, by the fall of the Girondists, gained the ascendancy, whilst he himself, getting appointed Colonel of a cavalry regiment, with the promise of a higher post almost immediately, set out to join General Queteneau. His amazement was great when he received his wife's letter, relating her capture on her passage to England.

She also mentioned that she had passed Miss Fleetwood off as her daughter, hoping he would be enabled to restore her to her own country.

Little could Madame D'Arblay have imagined, when she sent her letter, the effect it would produce, for she supposed that her movements, since they had parted in India, were as much unknown to him as the name of Fleetwood. But he had been informed of all relative to both, by William Thornback. He wanted money, and no sooner had he read his wife's communication than he dispatched a messenger to the Englishman, telling him that Miss Fleetwood was at his chateau, and her father and lover were prisoners at Doué. He added, that if he would join him immediately, he should be appointed captain in his regiment, and between them he had no doubt they could manage to convert the possession of the young heiress into a mine of gold.

William Thornback had just parted from James Tregannon, who had received letters from London, stating that he and his wife might safely return to England; that the constable, Trelawney, was dead; that he had nothing to fear, and that his presence was absolutely necessary. He procured passports, and proceeded into the Netherlands, promising William Thornback that the moment he should obtain the six thousand pounds out of the Pentoven estate, he would communicate with him.

Still possessed of the dangerous document, and satisfied that he held James Tregannon in his power, Thornback saw him depart without any alarm or uneasiness concerning their contract. But the receipt of Monseieur D'Arblay's letter gave him most exquisite pleasure. He could, he saw in a moment, crush his hated enemy in his dearest hopes; and, abandoning his schemes in Paris, he at once set out for the Province of Poitou, and joined Colonel D'Arblay, who had no difficulty in getting General Queteneau to appoint his friend to a captaincy, stating, as a plea, that he had formerly served with distinction on the Rhine. At this time the revolutionary army of France was composed of raw recruits and inexperienced officers; therefore Captain Thornback was very well received, and at once took his post in a regiment of dragoons.

Nothing, therefore, could exceed the rage and vexation of Captain Thornback, when intelligence reached them that the prison of Doué had been stormed by Henri de la Rochejaquelin, the garrison nearly cut to pieces, and the prisoners set free, and sent into the district held by the Vendean leader, Charette.

Seeing there was no time to lose, or Miss Fleetwood would also escape out of their hands, Colonel D'Arblay, his accomplice, and a party of dragoons, left for the Chateau Bois-Philibert; General Queteneau, at the same time, advancing upon Thouars with a powerful force, determined to crush and entirely annihilate the Vendean in that province.

Having accounted to our readers, in as brief a manner as possible, for the appearance of Captain Thornback with Colonel D'Arblay in the Chateau Bois-Philibert, we will return to our heroine, whom we left anxiously awaiting the coming of Hannah, and trusting to Providence that nothing unforeseen might prevent their escape that night from the chateau.

In less than half-an-hour the faithful attendant appeared, and Fanny perceived, by her cheerful countenance, that nothing had occurred to disturb their projects.

"It's all settled nicely, Miss Fanny, thanks to old Joseph, the gardener. I met Madame D'Arblay in the servants' hall, giving directions for accommodating a score of

dragoons in the chateau, and the housekeeper luckily being in the saloon, she whispered me—

“I have ordered Joseph, the gardener, to place a ladder against the end window of the conservatory; you can get into it from your gallery, as not a soul will sleep in your wing of the chateau. From the window of the conservatory you can descend into the garden, and Joseph, who hates the very name of a soldier, will leave the garden gate open. There is no other way for you to leave, for all the gates will be locked. Tell my beloved Fanny that I will pray for her safety, and trust in God I may yet escape from this land, never to return.”

“This was all she could say, for that cunning Mrs. Bonchamps came in, and Madame D’Arblay left the hall. I talked and chatted with the other servants quite gaily, though I didn’t understand a word they said, or they me, and taking some hot water from the fountain, I left without waiting for supper; but as I came along the gallery, I stepped into the conservatory, and, sure enough, there was the ladder ready. It’s not more than twenty odd feet down to the terrace, so I think we can manage that; but we must wait till a very late hour, for those noisy troopers will sit late, I fear, drinking.”

“God grant that they may not keep a watch round the chateau all night, and discover us escaping,” said Fanny, anxiously.

“Oh, they will keep watch, no doubt,” returned Hannah, “at the gates, and in the hall and outposts; but there is a strong force in the village, and they do not suspect we have any idea of escaping; besides, the conservatory is over the terrace, and the terrace leads only into the garden; the private path through the wood, you know, brings us out upon the main road, close to the lake.”

“Well,” observed Fanny, fervently, “I trust in Providence we shall succeed.”

“Had you not better lie down, Miss Fanny?” said Hannah, as she was actively engaged tying up some things in a bundle; “it will be past one o’clock before we can attempt to stir.”

“No, Hannah, I should not sleep; I shall not feel in the least the loss of a few hours’ rest. Oh! I wish Madame

D'Arblay could fly with us; she will never know peace or happiness with that bad man, her husband. His very companionship with that ruffian Thornback, extraordinary as it is, shows what he is."

As the hour approached for their departure, Fanny acquired courage and nerve. Hannah listened frequently, from the end of the corridor, to the various sounds throughout the house, till about one o'clock, when all seemed to be at rest, and a dead silence reigned throughout the mansion.

It was a fine still night, and, though no moon, it was yet tolerably light, for the sky was unclouded. Hannah waited yet another half-hour, and then taking up her bundle, and locking the door, carrying the key with her, to cause delay to those seeking them in the morning, accompanied by her young mistress, proceeded along the gallery, without any light but what came in through the windows.

In a short time they reached the conservatory, once the pride and delight of Madame D'Arblay, by whose directions it had been erected and ornamented, but now neglected and in ruins. Underneath was a long stone terrace, facing the extensive gardens, which were surrounded by a very high stone wall. A wood of some extent extended from the outside to the banks of the river. Entering the conservatory, they closed the door, and proceeding to the window, found it open, and the ladder placed in a convenient position, so that they might get upon it easily. Hannah gazed through the window and listened anxiously several minutes, but no unusual sound disturbed the stillness of the night, or rather early morning; in less than two hours it would be dawn, so there was no time to lose. Fanny had attired herself as plainly as it was possible, dispensing with any kind of cloak, merely a plain shawl and straw bonnet, which she had purchased at Rochelle.

She was by no means a timid or fearful girl, and was blessed with a fine constitution—young, strong, and active. She, therefore, got on the ladder, and descended with great ease. Hannah followed, and having gained the terrace, they were descending the flight of steps into the garden, when they caught the sound of a man evidently whistling a tune. They paused in great alarm. The next moment

they heard him beneath the terrace, humming in a careless, lively manner, the song of—

“Malbrook s'en va a la guerre.”

“Good heavens!” whispered Fanny to the terrified Hannah, crouching down at the same time, “there is a sentinel beneath the terrace; he is walking up and down before the back entrance to the chateau—I caught a glimpse of him, and a musket on his shoulder—what shall we do?”

Looking through the balustrades by the faint light, they watched the man, who kept alternately humming and whistling “Malbrook.” His walk did not extend as far as the steps of the terrace; and just opposite to the stairs was a long range of flowering evergreens. Fanny examined the spot as well as she could, and knowing the garden, said—

“We must venture across the walk, and steal along the shrubs and trees, and get to the gate. Once across the walk, the rest will be easy; so mind how you tread on the gravel, we cannot lose time.”

So saying, Fanny descended the flight of stairs, watching till the man turned in his walk. He was not more than ten yards from them. She sprung lightly across the walk, and crouched down behind a bushy laurestina. Hannah followed her example, and then both paused for a moment to listen, but the sentinel only changed his tune, getting tired of “Malbrook.” Their task was now comparatively easy. Keeping the shrubs and bushes between them and the sentry, they reached the small door leading out from the garden into the wood. This they opened noiselessly, and issued out into the private path leading down to the river.

“Thank God, we have escaped that danger,” exclaimed Fanny, breathing freely, after her excitement; “now, Hannah, we must walk the nine miles as fast as possible. When I was a young girl, I remember walking from Grange House into Charmouth with dear Claude for a wager, and that was four miles, and I did it in an hour.”

“Yes,” answered Hannah, with her usual merry laugh, when pleased; “and the wager was a kiss—so whether you won or lost, you were sure of the kiss. Ah, Miss Fanny, was not that the case?”

"Oh, fie, Hannah," returned the maiden, stepping out at a pace that almost puzzled Hannah; "you know there is a great deal of difference in giving a kiss and receiving one."

"Dear me, no, Miss Fanny; not at the age of fourteen, and you were scarcely that then. Ah, those were happy days."

"Do not sigh, Hannah—God is good and bountiful—there may be many happy days yet to come. Oh, if Claude was only near us, I should not fear anything."

In less than a quarter of an hour they reached the main road which ran along the river. It was a sweet, quiet scene, lighted only by the bright stars, the broad surface of the lake, unrippled by a breath of wind, looked like a vast mirror, with the stars sparkling beneath its surface, the rich dark foliage of the tall trees, that covered one side of the bank, forming a dense shadow.

Continuing along the road, and not encountering a human being, in something more than two hours and a half, they reached the side of the Morent just as daylight rendered every object distinct, and then they were delighted to perceive that the peasantry had thrown the long trunks of trees across the broken buttresses of the bridge, thus enabling them to cross to the hamlet.

It was nearly four o'clock when they reached the front of the neat auberge, where they had rested some four weeks previously. There did not appear to be a living thing stirring in the hamlet, save a few curs outside the cottages, and these set up a bark as our fugitives approached.

"We must wake the people up," said Hannah; "in two or three hours we shall be missed, and, doubtless pursued; and we must get up into the hills where they cannot follow us."

So saying, she knocked hard at the auberge door.

"Eh, *mon Dieu!*" exclaimed a head, with a red night-cap on it, popped suddenly out of a window above them. "Who have we here at this early hour?"

Fanny looked up, and recognised the head as that of a young lad belonging to the establishment, who had been very attentive and eager to serve them when last there, and recollecting his name, said,—

"Be quick, Ambroise, and open the door, like a *bon*

Ah, *mon Dieu!* mademoiselle, is it you?" exclaimed the lad, drawing off his red cap, and thereby displaying a much redder head, "I will dress and open the door."

In three or four minutes the amazed Ambroise was attired, had roused the two daughters of old Dame Marguerite, and opened the door, with a smile of infinite good humour and joy in his intelligent features, for he was greatly charmed with the beauty and grace of the fair English maiden. Showing them into the neat little sitting-room, he said,—

"Oh, mademoiselle, where have you come from at this hour, and on foot? I have called Rose and Janette, and they will be here in a minute."

"We have been obliged to run away from the revolutionary soldiers, Ambroise: they have taken the chateau, and they would have made us prisoners only we got away in the night," replied Fanny.

"Curse them!" exclaimed the lad, vehemently, and shaking his closed hand, "when I am a man wont I kill them: but where is madame?—ah, here is Janette."

As he spoke, the young girl, hastily attired, entered the room, looking at Fanny and her attendant with great astonishment.

Fanny soon satisfied her curiosity, and told her story: she already knew she was English, and not Madame D'Arblay's daughter, for once quit of Rochelle, and in the district of the insurgents, there was no need of deception, especially as Madame D'Arblay was well known in the hamlet of Saint Morent, and in the whole district where the Vendean war raged. The inhabitants were looking towards England for help and ammunition, therefore it was quite unnecessary to disguise Fanny's country. Her exquisite beauty and grace, the pleasing tone of her voice in speaking French, quite captivated all her hearers, and Rose and Janette were most assiduous in their attention to her while staying at their grandmother's auberge; but now, understanding the danger she was in, their anxiety and zeal was redoubled to serve her.

"We have a good quiet pair of mules in the stables," said the eldest of the girls, and Ambroise knows every inch of the road across the hills to Andre, where La Rochejaquelin's army is now, and even if they pursue you

they cannot find or follow the path Ambroise will take you."

Miss Fleetwood felt extremely grateful, and told the two girls that Ambroise should be well rewarded, and all expenses paid.

"Ah, mademoiselle," returned the simple, but kind-hearted girls, "if we were never to be paid, and had it in our power to afford you other assistance, we would do it cheerfully. We have our two brothers fighting in the army of Monsieur Henri, and we pray to the Blessed Virgin that she may give them victory over the cruel wretches that murdered our good king."

In half an hour, Fanny and Hannah had some hot coffee and white cakes for breakfast; and Ambroise, rejoiced at having to conduct our heroine to Andre, was busily preparing the mules for their departure. The grandmother was able to get up and bid them farewell, and kissing Fanny's cheek, blessed her repeatedly, praying that God would protect and restore her to her country and her parent.

Greatly affected by the simple, kind-hearted generosity of the hostess of Saint Morent, and her two pretty grandchildren, considerably refreshed by the short rest and breakfast, and full of hope and anticipation of getting to Andre without being overtaken, Fanny Fleetwood and Hannah pursued their journey, on two good mules, sitting on very comfortable pillions, and guided by Ambroise, dressed in his Sunday attire, with a good stick in his hand, and feeling quite proud of his responsibility.

We must, however, leave our heroine to pursue her perilous journey—for perilous it was—while in our next chapter we inquire into the fate of our hero and Mr. Fleetwood.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

WE left Mr. Fleetwood and Claude Tregannon prisoners on board the corvette *Legere*, which vessel anchored in the port of Rochelle. The prisoners were immediately landed and marched to the common prison of the town, and confined in separate cells. This was a severe trial to both:

however, after three days, to their great joy, they were again united. Their persons and attire being carefully examined, and everything they possessed taken from them, they were then told they were to be taken to the prison of Doué, and there accordingly they were marched, attended and guarded by a strong escort of mounted *gens d'armes*.

Doué was a remarkably strong place, but situated in a very healthy locality. The chambers were large and well ventilated. By a piece of good fortune the jailor did not object to permit Claude Tregannon and Mr. Fleetwood to occupy the same cell, and their time passed, conversing about, and conjecturing the probable fate of their beloved Fanny, hoping that Madame D'Arblay might be able to shelter and protect her, and finally get her to England. As to themselves, to escape was totally out of the question; but liberty was nearer than their most sanguine expectations could have anticipated. One night they were roused from their sleep by the thunder of cannon from the embattled walls of the prison. Claude sprang from his straw pallet, hastily dressed himself, and helped Mr. Fleetwood to do the same, saying—

“Depend on it, my dear sir, the fort is attacked by the Vendéans. You know, the jailor said the other day, that the insurgents were in great force in the Marais, and that he expected that the prisoners would be removed to Nantes, but that they feared to let them traverse the country between Doué and that place, till General Queteneau's army was organised and ready to advance upon the rebels.”

“God grant that they may gain the day,” said Mr. Fleetwood, “as you say they are royalists.”

A tremendous uproar ensued throughout the building, with frequent discharges of musquetry. After the first discharge, the cannon no longer thundered from the ramparts; the uproar evidently increased, and the discharges of muskets and pistols, and the cries of furious and enraged combatants came closer and closer. Just then a key was put in the door, the bolts drawn, and the jailor, with his wife and two children, rushed, with looks of terror, into the chamber.

The jailor's wife threw herself at the feet of Claude, saying, her eyes filled with tears—

“Save us, monsieur, save us from the Vendéans; we

showed you some kindness ; in return, save my children. It is to release the English prisoners that they have attacked the prison."

A loud shout and a rapid discharge of muskets and pistols was heard, a second triumphant shout, and then the ramp of many feet sounded along the stone passage.

"Ah, *mon Dieu* ! they come," exclaimed the woman and children.

"Be not afraid," said Claude, advancing between them and the door. "The royalists will not hurt women."

As he spoke, some twelve or fourteen men came rushing along the passage and then into the chamber, headed by a handsome young man in a plain dress, with a crimson sash, with a large knot twisted over the shoulder and waist, and in which were a brace of pistols. His face was highly flushed from the excitement of the combat. With his sword in his right hand, a pistol in his left, he advanced close to Claude, and looking up into his face, said—

Ah, monsieur, I have found you, *Dieu merci*, I feared you were not here, you are Monsieur le Capitain Tregannon !"

Though greatly surprised, our hero replied in the affirmative.

The insurgents stood resting and leaning on their muskets, gazing calmly upon the two young men. They were evidently struck with the appearance of the English captain, as youthful as their own leader, taller and more powerfully built, but both remarkably handsome.

"Well, Monsieur," said Henri de la Rochejaquelin, giving his name to our hero. "I am happy to tell you, you and your countrymen are free. I promised a fair maiden—a countrywoman of yours," he added, with a smile, "to set you free, and La Rochejaquelin has kept his word."

"Heavens !" exclaimed Claude Tregannon, pressing, warmly the hand freely held out to him. "Do you mean a young lady captured in an English vessel, with a French lady named D'Arblay ?"

"The same," said the French leader, "but we must not loiter here, I will explain another time. General Queneau is within three leagues, with a force of eight thousand

men, and I have only two hundred. Your countrymen are in the court-yard, so let us go."

"May I request a favour, Monsieur," said Claude, "these people, the jailor and his wife, showed me some kindness. I hope—."

"Oh, they are quite safe," returned the young leader, "but they must get out of this place, with their effects, as fast as they can, as I intend burning it to the ground. There go and be quick," he said, turning to the rejoiced jailor and his wife, "if there is anything you can carry out with you, take it, we are not plunderers. Arms and ammunition are all we seek; we have gained a good store here."

Mr. Fleetwood and Claude, both burning with impatience to hear more of their beloved Fanny, followed La Rochejaquelin into the court-yard of the prison. Numerous torches threw a light over a scene too often witnessed in civil wars. Numbers of the garrison of Doué prison lay dead upon the ground, together with several of the Vendéans, and nearly three hundred men, including the revolutionary soldiers and insurgents, crowded the yard; some busy assisting the wounded, others collecting arms and ammunition to carry away. Amongst them were the English sailors captured in the *Water Witch*; they at once crowded round our hero, wishing him joy, and in great spirits at regaining, so very unexpectedly, their liberty. Claude's old friend, Mr. Seabright, was well and hearty, and shook him fervently by the hand.

In half-an-hour all were ready for departure, the dead Vendéans were carried out to be buried, and the wounded placed upon two waggons found in the prison. Several horses were in the stables, these were great prizes. La Rochejaquelin ordered two of them to be saddled and bridled for the use of our hero and Mr. Fleetwood. The place was then set on fire, and the whole party, in less than an hour, were on march for St. Florent, the flames from the burning prison illuminating their path. It was broad daylight when the Vendéans entered the town where the whole of La Rochejaquelin's force was quartered.

The young royalist leader, and our hero, during the four hours' march, had become quite friendly. La Rochejaquelin related the manner in which he had encountered Ma-

damo D'Arblay and Fanny, and his promise to the latter of releasing the prisoners.

"I think, Monsieur Tregannon," continued the Vendean, "that your best plan will be to send your men to the Island of Noirmontiers where they will be perfectly safe, and ready on the first opportunity to embark for England, and your friend, Monsieur Fleetwood, had better accompany them. I know," he added, smiling, "that you will not leave this country till you carry your beautiful betrothed with you. I will help you to accomplish that desirable event with all my heart and soul, for I do not consider she is safe in the power of such a man as Colonel D'Arblay, one of the most ferocious and bloodthirsty of the revolutionary leaders. However, we will talk over this in the evening. There is an excellent auberge at St. Florent, and any funds you may require, I can let you have."

Claude warmly thanked the generous La Rochejaqueelin, who also informed him that he was about to join forces with Monsieur D'Elbée, an experienced commander, and who had all the parishes around Chollet and Bois-Priau under him. That their intention was to march upon Bressure, where General Queteneau then was.

On reaching St. Florent, Mr. Fleetwood and our hero took up their quarters at the Hotel Louis D'Or, and provided for the released prisoners in the town, all the inhabitants being willing to aid the Vendean Royalists.

Mr. Fleetwood, feeling somewhat fatigued, retired early to rest. La Rochejaqueelin, in the course of the evening, explained to our hero why he considered Miss Fleetwood in rather a perilous situation, should Colonel D'Arblay rejoin his wife.

"In the first place," he said, "he is a furious Revolutionist, and of the worst class, thirsting for the blood of the entire royal family. He is also known to be connected with a woman whose principles are notoriously vicious, and a fast friend of the terrible Robespierre; he is now a needy man, and unscrupulous how he obtains gold, so he does obtain it."

As the whole district round Chateau Bois-Philibert was up in arms against the Republic, it would be safe and easy, the Vendean thought, for Claude Tregannon, speaking the language as he did, with the few men he would spare

him, to proceed to the Chateau and rescue Miss Fleetwood from all peril that she might incur by remaining with Madame, who could not know the terrible character her husband had gained during her absence from him. He would furnish him with letters to General Charette, who held the Marais and the Isle of Noirmontiers, with a force of nearly twenty thousand men. From thence it would be easy to embark for England.

This plan of operation completely agreed with Claude Tregannon's wishes; but as his generous friend was resolved to advance upon St. Fulgent the next day, and drive out of it one thousand two hundred Republicans said to be stationed there, he begged to be allowed to accompany him in that expedition; and the road being open, and the entire district freed from the enemy, he would then pursue his way for the Chateau. It would give the men who were to accompany him an opportunity of judging how willing he was to fight in their cause. La Rochejaquelin grasped the Englishman's hand with a bright smile, saying—

“That will give me greater pleasure than anything you could do; it will, as you say, please my men who so willingly stormed Doué Prison to free you. Keep your intention from Mr. Fleetwood, for fear he should feel uneasy; and we had better get him to leave to-morrow. I can procure a calechè for Olone, where he will have excellent quarters till you join him.”

It was late when the two young men separated; the next day Claude, having communicated his project of proceeding in search of Madame D'Arblay and Fanny, after a time persuaded Mr. Fleetwood, who was, at his age and bodily health, unable to undergo so much fatigue, to proceed at once in a calechè with Mr. Seabright, furnished with letters to Olone, where he hoped to join him, in a few days, with Fanny and her attendant Hannah.

“I trust in God you will succeed, my son,” said Mr. Fleetwood, affectionately embracing Claude; “I shall wait, in great anxiety, your arrival; be very careful and cautious.”

After Mr. Fleetwood's departure, Claude called his crew together, and told them that he would send them on to Olone or the Isle of Noirmontiers, and that he hoped to join them there in a few days; but having been so gallantly

set free by the Royalists, he was resolved to strike one blow on their side before he left them.

With a loud cheer, every one of the Water Witch's crew threw their hats in the air, shouting with all their might, "Success to the Vendéans!" declaring they would, every man jack of them, follow their Captain, and have a brush with the Revolutionists on land, to make up for their defeat on the sea. They vowed they would make a flag for themselves before morning, and they would like to see any d—d Revolutionist that could make them strike it.

When the Vendean insurgents heard this, for it was repeated to them by their leader, a universal embracing took place, and a remarkably convivial evening ensued. It was certainly curious how soon the British sailor contrived to make himself understood. Before morning every man had a sash and cockade, a musket, a cutlass, and pistol; the entire force of La Rochejaquelin was unencumbered with baggage, for in the singular war of La Vendée the peasantry, who would never remain long from their homes, carried with them only bread and provisor for a few days, the several parishes they passed through supplying them with what they required. Every man amongst the Vendean army was a splendid marksman using his gun with a deadly certainty, and always favoured by the nature of the country, intersected, as it was, by thick and impervious hedges. From behind these they generally attacked their enemies; and knowing the country intimately, it was impossible to pursue them, should they think fit to retreat during the night.

Henri de la Rochejaquelin had received intelligence during the night, that General Marce, with twelve hundred men, partly troops of the line and a portion from the national guard, had left St. Vincent and was marching upon St. Fulgent, and had added nine pieces of cannon to his force; La Rochejaquelin therefore resolved to attack General Marce, selecting a place where the nature of the country gave him immense advantage.

Marching before day-break, the Vendean leader posted his men behind some rising grounds and impervious hedges, and then waited the approach of the Republican army. Claude Tregannon, furnished with a sash, a cockade, and a handsome rifle and sabre, had marched by the side of La

Rochejaquelin, conversing, and greatly excited and inspired by the heroic courage displayed by a parcel of undisciplined peasants going to attack a formidable body of disciplined troops, well armed, and protected by artillery; and yet each man felt as confident of victory, and as easy and cheerful, as if marching to a bridal. Our hero, who did not presume to give an opinion, beheld, with astonishment, the admirable manner in which this young and inexperienced soldier posted his men, so that the force of General Marce would be exposed to a murderous fire from the Vendéans, without being able to use their artillery.

It was after two o'clock in the afternoon before General Marce's army came in sight; he had stopped to rebuild a bridge the Vendéans had nearly destroyed. The moment selected for opening their fire arrived, and, at a signal from their leader, a murderous one was poured in upon the astonished Revolutionists from all sides. Unable to attack an enemy concealed behind rising ground and hedges, the Republican army wavered—another destructive volley completed the panic; and as General Marce's men broke and divided, the signal was given, and, with a loud, triumphant cheer, the Vendéans rushed down upon the Republicans, who, after a short but fierce conflict, turned and fled, leaving their artillery in the hands of the victors.

In the fury of the onset, the Vendean leader was struck to the ground by a tall officer, who, raising his sword, was about to dispatch his enemy, when Claude, who followed close upon his steps, rushed in, and caught the blow on his own sword; and not wishing to kill the man, he closed with him, and catching him as a Cornish wrestler does his antagonist, lifted him up and hurled him over on the sod—little thinking his antagonist was General Marce.

"That's repaying me, *mon ami*, in good earnest," said La Rochejaquelin to our hero, as he helped him up, a little stunned; "I owe you my life."

A few minutes more and the contest was over, the enemy having dispersed and fled in every direction. This was considered at the period a very brilliant affair, as the Vendéans lost only a few men, and captured nine pieces of cannon and a great quantity of arms and ammunition.

The crew of the *Water Witch* enjoyed the affair amaz-

ingly, capturing several of the enemy, besides taking General Marce's own baggage and the flag of the regiment as their individual spoil; no prisoners, however, were ever retained; depriving them of their arms and accoutrements, they were set free.

After this exploit, La Rochejaquelin and his men returned to their quarters, all enthusiastic in their admiration of their English allies. A day or two after, the crew of the *Water Witch* left with several guides for the Isle of Noirmontiers, where they were to wait for their young commander for a few days; but if at that time he did not join them, they were to take the first opportunity of embarking for England. One young man, a native of Lyme Regis, for whom our hero had a great partiality, begged most earnestly that he might remain behind and attend on him. This man was in the yacht when our hero saved Miss Fleetwood's life, and had gallantly leaped overboard to assist him in doing so.

Tom Starling was a fine, good-looking man, full of strength, life, and spirits, and the favourite of all on board the *Surinam* on the voyage out, and a great favourite of Miss Fleetwood's. On their return, in the action with the *Legère*, when the corvette's crew boarded the *Water Witch*, Tom Starling followed our hero like a shadow fought by his side inch by inch, and would have sacrificed his life ten times over to save his commander's. Tom's petition, therefore, was gladly granted.

While La Rochejaquelin was corresponding with and receiving messengers from the other chiefs of the insurrection, and preparing for a grand junction of their forces Claude Tregannon prepared for his expedition to the Chateau Bois-Philibert. After consulting together, both our hero and La Rochejaquelin were of opinion that he had better proceed to the chateau, accompanied only by Tom Starling and an experienced guide. There was no danger of an enemy; he had received secret intelligence that Colonel D'Arblay was still with General Queteneau and his dragoons. Furnished with a letter from La Rochejaquelin, and backed by the instructions of the able guide he would send with him, should he want any assistance, he could raise a score of men in any of the hamlets of the district. Attired similarly to the Vendean soldiers, with sash

and cockade, our hero would anywhere be well received, for the feeling against the Republic was universal from Nantes to the Isle of Noirmontiers, all over the district called the Sands, through Airvault, St. Florent, to the banks of the Loire, as well as the vast track called the "Marais."

Accordingly, two days after the battle with General Marce, Claude Tregannon and Tom Starling, well mounted and armed, left the army. The parting of the two young men was most affectionate. La Rochejaquelin felt their separation exceedingly, for he had conceived quite a brotherly feeling for the preserver of his life.

"When you reach Noirmontiers with your affianced," said the Vendean leader, "send a messenger to me, and, if alive and well, I will spare a day or two to bid you both farewell; but should any unforeseen accident occur—for we cannot foresee what is before us—to prevent your seeing mademoiselle, and taking her from the chateau, return to me, and I will aid you with all my power."

Claude Tregannon felt extremely the generous and noble conduct of the young leader, and most fervently trusted that he might prosper in the good and royal cause he had embraced; and thus they parted.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

TOM STARLING, like all sailors, was a reckless, but indifferent horseman. For the first ten miles of their road, he tried all imaginable positions on the animal he bestrode. He, at first, disliked the bow of his craft, as he styled the head of his horse. The animal had spirit, and tossed his neck, and, as Tom perched himself well forward, he, at times, came in contact with the head.

"He pitches and heaves," growled Tom, after a hard knock, "as if he was making head way in a cross sea. I'm blowed if I don't face the stern," he muttered to himself as he rode behind his master, and to the great amusement of the guide. Tom tacked, as he had said, and faced the stern. This unusual method surprised the horse so much, that he kicked violently, on which Tom vociferated—

"Avast heaving, you lubber, and I'll sit amidships to please you."

Our hero looked round, hearing the voice of Tom, just as the latter, in shifting his position, came to the ground.

"Why, Tom, you have lost the command of your craft," said Claude Tregannon, as the sailor regained his legs, laughing good-humouredly—the French guide highly amused, though rather astounded, at Tom's proceedings.

"There's no pleasing her, your honour," said Tom, "I've tried her fore and aft, starboard and larboard; she's as uneasy as a lass going to be spliced."

"Change with our guide," said our hero; "his mule seems very quiet."

"I don't like them ere craft, sir—they're not ship shape—neither one thing or another—I'd rather stick to this here lively one—I'll take a haul on the shrouds, and may be she'll work easier."

So saying, he so shortened his stirrups that his knees were level with the pommel of the saddle; but that seemed to please Tom exceedingly, and, with a long speech to his French companion, who nodded his head, saying—"Oui, oui, c'est bon," they proceeded.

Their first day's journey was through a very peculiar country.

Halting for the night at Landri, the guide picked up a piece of intelligence, from some peasants who came into the hamlet in the evening, that would force them to make a considerable detour to reach Chateau Bois-Philibert. The peasant averred that General Queteneau had sent Colonel D'Arblay, with his regiment of dragoons, into that district, and also that two regiments of infantry were direct in their route. This intelligence, if true, was greatly against their project, and rendered our hero extremely uneasy. On consulting with his guide, the man said he could take him by another road, longer certainly, but by fording the Isaure, and crossing the hills, they could reach Saint Morent before evening, and that hamlet was within three leagues of Bois-Philibert.

Accordingly, they set out early in the morning, and going, at a smart pace, over an execrable road, and through a country thickly intersected with hedge-rows and much timber, about three o'clock in the day, they reached the

top of a rising ground looking down into the vale through which ran the Isaure. As they rode down the descent, Claude Tregannon, who was some way a-head, perceived, coming along the valley towards the river, several persons on horseback. The distance was yet too great to make them out, but he thought he caught the sparkle of steel accoutrements of a horse soldier, and the next moment some white garments amidst the group. Halting his horse behind a clump of trees, and holding up his hand to those behind, he waited till the group came out into the broad road through the valley, so that he might make them out distinctly. His guide, a stout, able young man, anxiously watched the party.

"They are dragoons, monsieur—four in number."

"Yes," interrupted Claude Tregannon, with considerable excitement of manner; "and there are two females in the midst of them, on small horses or mules, and a man on foot. By heavens! something strikes me that the females may be Madame D'Arblay and Miss Fleetwood."

Tom Starling heard the names, though he did not understand the sentence. Drawing his cutlass, he exclaimed—

"Heave a head, your honour, and let us pitch into them before they see our colours—there's only four."

"Stay a moment—stay a moment—be cool and quiet, Tom," said Claude; "I see now, plainly enough, they are dragoons, and that the females are on mules—the foremost rider is an officer; he may be Madame D'Arblay's husband, therefore it will not do to rashly attack them; in five minutes or so we shall be able to distinguish the females."

In a few minutes they were close under them, and Tom suddenly exclaimed—

"By the pipers, that's Mrs. Hannah on the near mule, and that's the young mistress as sure as a gun, on the star-board side. Wont I board that tall fellow in the moustache, beside Mrs. Hannah," muttered Tom, settling himself for a charge, and eager to commence hostilities.

"I can take down that foremost horseman from here," said the Vendean guide, unslinging his rifle; "he's a dragoon of D'Arblay's blood-thirsty regiment,"

"Nay, hold your hand, Gourtrand," said our hero; "the females are those we seek; but whether that tall man is madame's husband or not, I cannot say? but we must not

shoot him, for madame's sake without seeing whether it is or not. Now follow me."

And, with a palpitating heart, he road rapidly down the hill. The noise of the horses' hoofs first attracted the notice of the dragoons, who slightly checked their speed, the next moment they were within a hundred yards of them.

The officer who road in front instantly drew a pistol from his holster, whilst the three dragoons in the rear, with their short musketoons resting in the case by the muzzle, pulled them out, but as they did so, the sharp report of a rifle was heard, and instantly one of the dragoon horses was freed from its rider, who fell to the ground, mortally wounded. A wild cry from Fanny Fleetwood, for it was she, as she attempted to turn her mule, satisfied our hero that they were captives to the dragoons, but before he could reach them, the officer, who was mounted on a splendid charger, spurred alongside the startled mule, grasped Fanny round the waist, despite her struggles and shrieks, lifted her on to his saddle, and then spurred on furiously for the ford over the Isaure.

With a shout of intense rage and vexation, Claude Tregannon rode after the dragoon, whilst, with the shock of a wild bull, Tom Starling, cutlass in hand, came, as he styled it, stem on with one of the dragoons, who fired his carbine within a yard of his head without effect; the next instant he and the dragoon were rolling on the ground grappling each other in desperate contest, whilst the fourth dragoon turned and fled.

Our hero was well mounted—his horse, a strong, fleet animal, went over the ground at a killing pace—he was within a hundred yards of the rapid and dangerous ford of the Isaure, and not fifty yards behind the fugitive officer, when the latter turned in his saddle, and fired his pistol at his pursuer: the ball tore the cockade from his hat, but on they went, Claude gaining on the dragoon. Without hesitation, the fugitive dashed into the rapid stream—but by this time Claude was within ten yards, and could have shot his horse dead, but feared he might injure Fanny in the fall. The officer turned, and, seeing he would be caught, suddenly grasped the shrieking girl round the body, hurled her into the rapid stream, shouting at the top of his voice—

“Curse you, I know you! but I’ll have my revenge yet.”

Brief and rapid as was the glance, Claude Tregannon recognised the face of the dragoon, and saw that it was his mortal enemy, William Thornback. He bestowed not a thought upon him, but with a pang, impossible to describe, he beheld his beloved Fanny sink beneath the current. The next instant he had abandoned his horse and plunged into the stream after her. Though shallow at the ford, the Isaure was a deep, and very rapid stream. As Fanny rose to the surface, Claude reached her side and grasped her round the body, then keeping her well up, swam with the stream. His guide having come up, threw himself off his horse, and ran along the bank, watching for a place and an opportunity to rush in and aid the almost exhausted Claude. Happily, a bend in the stream on the side the guide was, enabled our hero to make an effort for gaining the bank. Wading in up to his waist, the guide grasped Claude Tregannon’s extended hand, and in a minute more our hero bore his loved, but senseless burthen up the bank.

As he did so, a young lad, urging on a mule on which sat Hannah, reached the spot; the terrified and attached young woman threw herself from the mule, and ran to the assistance of her mistress, in a state of mind not to be described.

Leaving our hero and the rest to recover Fanny, who had a most perilous escape, we must follow for a while the proceedings of Tom Starling. Having knocked his antagonist senseless, with the heavy butt of one of his pistols, he contrived to mount his horse again, and ride after his master with might and main, uttering various strange expressions to his startled steed, which happened to be a remarkably fast one.

“Now then, you lubber, crack on,” shouted Tom, as his eyes were intensely fixed on his commander and the flying dragoon, with difficulty keeping himself on the saddle. However, he arrived in time to witness the dragoon throwing Miss Fleetwood into the stream, and Claude dashing in after her; furious with rage, Tom plunged in, shouting to the dragoon, who, after tossing into the stream the unfortunate girl, to stop the pursuit of his enemy, pursued his way; but his horse had evidently hurt his fore foot amongst the

huge stones in the ford. Tom, half soaked in wet, and half off his horse, still pursued, grasping both saddle and bridle with one hand and flourishing his cutlass with the other, and shouting to the fugitive to douse his topsails and heave to.

William Thornback, convulsed with rage and vexation, defeated perpetually by the man he detested, and forced to fly while thirsting for revenge, hearing the shouts of the sailor behind him, exclaimed, with an oath of savage passion,—

“Curse that fool, I’ll brain him for his pains, or else I shall lame my horse before I get out of this scrape.”

Drawing another pistol from his holster, he drew in his steed and wheeled round, but fortune was against the villain, or rather Providence had resolved that the ruffian’s career should end now and for ever. The pistol missed fire, and Tom, with a wild cheer, dashed headlong at his enemy in the same manner as before, hurling Captain Thornback and his horse to the ground, his own beast, reeling and staggering with the shock, and panting from over-exertion, also fell. Before Tom could rise, Captain Thornback had extricated himself from his fallen steed, and, savage and exasperated, rushed, with his drawn sabre, to slay his pursuer; but Tom, though he lay sprawling on his back, with one foot entangled in the stirrups, put his hand into his breast, and pulled out his pistol, having thrust it in there for want of his sash, which had been torn from him in his previous struggle, and fired full in the face of his enemy, just as he raised his sabre to slay him.

It was a deadly shot, the ball shattering his lower jaw, and mortally wounding him.

“Curse you, you coward!” shouted Tom, “that’s settled your reckoning for you, you villain, to try to drown my young mistress.”

William Thornback, with a terrible groan of agony, staggered back and fell prostrate on the sod, while Tom very quietly commenced extricating his foot. Having worked himself free, he rose up, shook himself to ascertain that his bones were all right, and then advanced towards his enemy, whom he perceived struggling to get at something. The blood was streaming from his jaw, and he was evidently dying, and yet he had struggled to unlose his coat,

and was pulling a clasped pocket-book from the interior. When Tom reached his side he had the leather case in his hand, and was making a vain effort to open it. Raising his glassy eyes, he looked into Tom Starling's face, and holding his shattered jaw with one hand, he murmured, in a very indistinct voice,—

"You have killed me—in a few minutes I shall cease to live; if you do not want me to curse you open this case, and let me have the papers inside."

Tom started back, electrified, on hearing his own language; he grew pale and felt frightened, wondering if he had slain a wrong man, but then recollecting the act the man had committed, and his intention of taking his own life, he consoled himself: willing to oblige the dying man in so small a matter, he took the leather case, untied the silk fastening, and opened the clasp; and perceiving that it contained only four or five papers, he was on the point of handing them to the struggling, agonised wretch, lying at his feet, when the single word Tregannon, on one of the papers, caught Tom's eye; he drew back his hand. William Thornback writhed in agony.

"Give them—give them, villain—curse you—oh."

His hand fell from his jaw, the blood poured forth, a struggle, and then he rolled over on his face, a corpse.

"Oh! curse away; curses hurt nobody," said Tom Starling; "these papers may be of use to my master—let's see if he has anything else—all fair in war. Who the deuce can he be?" and Tom very deliberately overhauled the enemy, finding two letters, a purse of gold Louis, and a worn passport.

As he turned round to look for his horse, he perceived, making right for the ford of the Isaure, a large party of dragoons in full gallop. Tom now thought his reckoning was run out. To get on horseback and fly was out of the question; but seeing a high, thick hedge within fifty yards of him, he ran for it, and with a violent effort, squeezed himself through. Similar thick, high hedges bounded all the fields on the side of the hill, so continuing along another, he came to a row of beech trees, up one of these he climbed with all the ability of a sailor, and settling himself on a stout, leafy bough, he could see through the leaves the spot where he had left the dead dragoon officer.

Looking back, he saw twenty or thirty men riding up from the ford; but as he anxiously inspected them, he could see clearly enough neither his master or either of the females were with them. Though this relieved his mind, it excessively astonished him; how was it possible that they escaped the party he was gazing at?

In a few minutes the dragoons halted by the side of their dead officer, and a dozen of the men sprung from their saddles. Some raised the body, whilst others began searching the bushes and hedges, but did not seem inclined to push their way through. Whilst Tom was thus gazing at their proceedings, he was absolutely confounded by seeing a long range of smoke burst from behind one of the distant hedges on the opposite side of the road, while at the same moment a sharp volley of musketry pealed through the air. Four of the dragoons bit the dust, rolling off their horses, mortally wounded, while several of the horses, struck by the balls, became mad with pain and ungovernable. An instantaneous panic seized the rest; they knew from experience that they could not reach their invisible foes, ambushed behind those almost impervious hedges, therefore leaping into their saddles, and placing the body of their slain commander across his own horse, they retreated towards the ford, but not before another volley emptied three more of the saddles, the horses flying wildly over the road. In a few minutes they had re-crossed the ford, and continued their flight along the road they had just come up by. Such was generally the result of all contests between the revolutionary cavalry and the Vendéans.

Tom Starling now beheld about twenty or more armed peasants come out from behind the hedge, and pushing their way through a part known to themselves, ran down to rifle the dead and dying dragoons.

"My eyes and limbs," said Tom, "perhaps as I cannot manage their lingo they may shoot me, and I have lost my cockade. Confound that rascal that shot off my truck."

Grumbling and muttering to himself, yet still exceedingly anxious concerning his master and Miss Fleetwood, Tom descended the tree, and very resolutely approached the armed peasants, who were scientifically stripping the dead dragoons of their arms, ammunition, and accoutre-

ments. Squeezing himself through the hedge, he advanced towards the men, who saw him approaching without evincing any surprise, or even desisting from their occupation. One of the insurgents, a handsome man of some five or six and twenty years, attired in a dark green hunting suit, with the Vendean sash and cockade, was standing, leaning on a handsome-stocked rifle, regarding the men collecting the arms. He looked up, as Tom Starling came on, and held out his hand, saying—

“*Ah, mon ami, tu es brave garçon.*”

Tom took the hand held out to him in his large muscular paw, giving it a squeeze that caused the Frenchman to exclaim, “*diable,*” while Tom, in reply, said—

“Aigh, aigh, my hearties, here I am, Tom Starling, at your service. Curse me if I understand one word that you say.”

At this address in English, the whole party turned sharply round, and gazed with astonishment at Tom. But their leader, the man in the green hunting suit, burst into a hearty laugh, saying to his men—

“This is one of the English that La Rochejaquelin took out of the prison of Doué, and who behaved so gallantly fighting against General Marce’s force, but how the *diable* to make him understand me, I can’t think, or what brought him here in pursuit of that dragoon officer he shot.”

Tom rubbed his head hard as he listened to this long speech, not understanding a word of it, but mustering up all the French he knew, he turned to the gentleman, for gentleman he certainly was, in green, and said—

“*Parlez vous English?*”

“No, *mon ami*, no. *Sacra Dieu!*—*Gott dam—voilà tous.*”

And he burst into a hearty laugh.

“Well, blow me,” growled Tom, “if I ain’t in a fix, like a craft in irons.”

A sudden exclamation, however, from one of the men, caused Tom to look round, when, to his infinite joy and amazement he beheld his master and the French guide, Gourtrand, walking rapidly up from the river towards them.

“Ha, ha, Monsieur Gott Dam,” said Tom, “here’s my master; we shall get into ship-shape directly—but I wonder where the women are stowed away?”

Claude Tregannon, with all the appearance of having undergone a thorough soaking, came rapidly up, saying to Tom Starling who ran towards him—

"Well, Tom, I am rejoiced to see you safe and sound. I was alarmed when I heard you had pursued that villain; would to God I could have followed him!"

"By the pipers of war, your honour," said Tom with a quiet smile, "his log is run out, anyhow."

"How," said our hero with a start and flushed cheek, "do you mean to say you killed him!"

"Upon my soul, sir, I boarded him stem on, and sent him clean over on his beam ends, but my own craft heeled over with the shock, and left me high and dry, like a turtle on its back, with my starboard leg jammed in the rigging; as he came up with his sword lifted to scuttle me, I shot him through the jaw; but here's the captain of those men coming to speak to you—please, sir, where's Miss Fleetwood?"

"Safe, thank God! and not much the worse for the cowardly act of that desperate villain."

The leader of the peasants saluted our hero, saying—

"Captain Tregannon, I presume; my name is De Les-cure; I am a cousin of La Rochejaquelin, and shall be most happy to serve you in any way I can."

Claude held out his hand, and shaking the Vendean chief's warmly, said—

"I shall have reason all my life to remember La Vendee, for I have experienced the greatest kindness and generosity from its inhabitants. How came you, monsieur, to know me so immediately?"

"Oh, that's easily accounted for!" returned the Frenchman with a smile, "two days ago a messenger from my cousin Henri reached me with letters; he mentioned your intention of going through this district to Chateau Bois-Philibert, and spoke in terms of affection of you, and how bitterly he regretted your departure. I have heard of you before, monsieur, and of your gallantry, and that of your men in fighting General Marce's division; from Henri's description, there was no mistaking you at a glance—but, how is this; you are dripping wet, you must have taken a wrong ford of the Isaure."

"Oh, no, monsieur!" replied Claude, "I had a pretty

good dose of the river, but I have a lady to attend to not far off, and I am thinking those dragoons you drove away may return in greater force."

"Ah, *mon Dieu*, I understand; you have succeeded in rescuing the young lady from Chateau Bois-Philibert. As to the dragoons, there is little fear of cavalry in this kind of country; I was aware that D'Arblay's force, and two regiments of infantry were marched into these parishes, and that that blood-thirsty revolutionist had committed great excesses. They say there is an Englishman, a captain in his troop, a perfect devil in wickedness and ferocity."

"Yes, returned our hero, "I knew him well, he was shot by this man, one of my crew. It was his body you saw carried off by his men."

Ah, Dieu merci!" exclaimed Monsieur De Lescure with great vivacity, "your man is a brave garçon and shall not go without reward. Come here my man," he continued, motioning Tom Starling to approach, which he did with his usual smile on his face, "will you tell this fine fellow," said Monsieur De Lescure, taking a very handsome gold watch from his pocket and handing it to Tom, who looked amazed—"That I give him this for two reasons: first, that it may remind him of us, poor Royalists, who are fighting to maintain our national freedom, and the rights of our religion, our king, and our seignors. I do not offer him gold, in the second place, because it is scarce with us, and what we can get we spend in arms and ammunition; he is a brave fellow and has rid us of one devil, at all events."

When our hero explained this to Tom, he took the watch with great reverence, and then lugging out the purse of gold he had taken from William Thornback, he handed it to Claude, saying—

"Well, your honour, I am dumfounded—taken all aback—my jaw tackle at the best of times, being none of the clearest; tell his honour I will keep the watch as long as I live, and if ever I get spliced, which in course I will, if I lives and my girl holds on, I will leave the watch to what your honour would call your ancestors, or posterities, or some such long-shore word; and that in return I beg that that this gold, which I took from the enemy, may be distributed amongst the men, and so, your honour, here's long

life and success to the Vendéans!" and Tom made a remarkable bow all round.

Claude translated this speech of Tom's, smiling as he did so; and notwithstanding all Monsieur De Lescure could do or say, Tom was resolute, so the gold was actually divided between the peasants to buy powder and drink Tom's health, which they vowed they would do that night in a bumper.

In about an hour Fanny Fleetwood and her attendant, Hannah, remounted their mules, the former having changed her dripping garments, Hannah having fortunately packed up in her bundle a change or two, and were pursuing their way to Landri, escorted by Monsieur Lescure and his men. Claude Tregannon and Tom Starling having, with the assistance of the guide, caught their horses, rode by their side—Tom entertaining Hannah with the account of his exploit.

As they proceed we will explain to our readers how Fanny fell into the hands of Captain Thornback, and how Claude Tregannon, after rescuing her from the rapid stream of the Isaure, contrived to escape the pursuit and search of the dragoons.

After leaving the village of Saint Morent, our heroine pursued her journey, guided over the intricate road across the mountain, by Ambroise; on descending, about mid-day, the plain on the other side, they halted for an hour at a small hamlet; when the good-natured woman in whose cottage they stopped to refresh the mules, for there was no auberge in the place, heard that they intended sleeping that night at Landri, she said—

"You can do so, certainly, but if you are seeking to avoid the revolutionary soldiers, as the lad who is guiding you says you are, you cannot go through Drouet, for they say there is a great number of troops quartered there, waiting for some colonel to join them with his dragoons. You had better cross this valley, and get into the road leading through the valley of the Isaure, over which there is a ford, which you can't miss, as there is a huge post marking the place."

The mere mention of revolutionary soldiers frightened Hannah, and indeed her mistress; so they resolved to proceed, though it was three leagues further to go through the Isaure, instead of sleeping at Landri, which was much too near to the Revolutionists.

Now this piece of information inducing them to go out of their way, though it saved them from General Marce's fugitive soldiers, threw them into the power of Captain Thornback:

Their flight from the Chateau Bois-Philibert was not discovered till after six o'clock in the morning, thus giving them four hours' start of the enraged Captain Thornback, who had actually determined to force Fanny Fleetwood to become his wife, thereby inflicting a fearful vengeance on Claude Tregannon.

The flight of Fanny made the Captain furious. Knowing that the whole country through which she would doubtless proceed was in favour of the insurrection, with Colonel D'Arblay's sanction, he ordered fifty men of the regiment to follow him as speedily as they could, whilst he with three of his men mounted, and took the way to Saint Morent.

Though they denied all knowledge of the fugitives at the auberge, William Thornback was too keen a pursuer, and too accustomed to all kinds of stratagems, not to be wide awake to every sign and token.

On a minute examination of the premises, and the people of the auberge, he became satisfied the fugitives had been there a few hours before; so seizing an unfortunate lad, who was a helper in the stables, he ordered his men to tie him up and flog him till he declared which way the two females had gone. The poor boy, after the first blow had been inflicted, declared the truth; and Captain Thornback, with a grin of triumph and a frightful curse at the two trembling girls, Rose and Janette, remounted his horse, swearing that on his return he would burn the house.

Continuing his way over the mountain, he lost some time by being imperfectly guided by one of his men; still he reached the little hamlet two hours after the departure of Miss Fleetwood and Hannah. The same threats forced the inhabitants to say that the fugitives had been there, and that they had continued their road to Landri. So far they spoke the truth, but they did not say that they had taken another road, much longer and quite contrary, as it appeared, to the way they ought to go; Captain Thornback pushed on three leagues without overtaking them, and meeting some women on the road, he inquired, in a very

civil manner, whether they had met two females on mules; they replied that they had not, although they had come all the way from Landri. He felt he had been deceived, or he must have overtaken them earlier, at the rate he rode.

In doubt what to do, he pulled up, when one of his men informed him there was a road from the last hamlet, that led through the valley of the Isaure. He retraced his way to the hamlet, where he met a score of his troopers just riding in.

Again he tried his cruel experiment of flogging; a poor boy who was frightened out of his senses by his brutal treatment, and who had seen the party pass, directed him to the road they had taken. This delay saved the fugitives, for had he overtaken them one half hour sooner, Claude Tregannon would not have arrived to their rescue, or Monsieur Lescure have heard the shots that arrested him in his march to join the force of Monsieur D'Elbee.

Having overtaken our heroine and Hannah, to their infinite horror and disgust, Captain Thornback determined to continue their route over the Isaure, and regain the road, and thus get back by another way to the Chateau Bois-Philibert, fearing that many of the peasants in the hamlets he had passed through, might, in revenge for the treatment he had used towards the young lad and the girl, lie in ambush, and shoot down his men. Thus he ended his career by dreading the consequences of his own cruelty.

Claude Tregannon, in saving Fanny from the waters of the Isaure, was carried nearly half a mile down the rapid stream before he could, with the guide's assistance, gain the bank. This, as it happened, was a most fortunate circumstance, for, within fifty yards of the spot, was a shepherd's hut, and the man, who was close by, watching his herd, ran to his assistance in carrying her to the hut.

Anxious to ascertain the fate of his man, Tom Starling, whom the guide informed him had pursued the dragoon officer, they proceeded along the banks of the river. As they walked rapidly on, they heard the tramp of the troop of dragoons coming along the hard road leading to the ford of the Isaure. The dragoon who had fled, having encountered his comrades coming slowly along the road, brought them back to the assistance of his captain.

When Claude and the guide heard the tramp of horses,

they crouched down behind the bank, and beheld the men pass the ford, and shortly after, as they climbed to the top of the bank, they heard the volley of musketry from the Vendean rifles, and beheld the retreat of the dragoons with the dead body of their captain.

Having thus explained the capture of Miss Fleetwood, and the consequences following it, we shall resume our story in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

MONSIEUR DE LESCURE escorted Claude Tregannon and his fair companion to the town of Landri, where they found an excellent hotel, in which he left them, saying—

“You will now have no difficulty or trouble in reaching the Isle of Noirmontier, for the entire country from this place to Olone is in our hands, and not a Republican soldier in the whole district. You have your letters from my cousin Henri safe in your possession, so that you will receive every assistance from Monsieur Charette, who is at the head of twenty thousand men. Should you not be able to get to some English vessel of war off the coast, he will, no doubt, procure you a craft to take you to England, and I trust in God, that your government will assist us with the arms and ammunition they promised.”

“Most sincerely do I trust they will,” warmly responded Claude.

Having seen that his beloved, and now happy Fanny, had everything she required, Claude's next care was to reward Ambroise for the courage he had shown, and the manner in which he had supported the drooping spirits of the females when overtaken by Thornback. Having performed this duty, he proceeded in search of a carriage in which to resume their journey on the following day. Tom Starling no sooner found his master disengaged, than he took from his pocket the leather case, saying—

“Here, your honour, is part of the spoil I took from that rascally English traitor I shot. He wanted me to give him the papers inside to destroy; and so, your honour, I would have done, but, you see, the villain was forced to

hold his broken jaw with one hand, so he asked me to open the case for him, which I did, and, as I looked at the papers inside, I saw your honour's name."

"Good God, Tom!" interrupted Claude, with considerable agitation of manner, "this case may contain a paper for which I would willingly pay a thousand pounds. If so, your fortune is made;" and taking the case from the astounded sailor, he hurried up to his chamber, burning with anxiety to examine the contents, while Tom Starling kept repeating—

"One thousand pounds! My eyes and limbs, what kind of a piece of paper can it be? One thousand pounds! By the pipers of war, I'll splice with Poll the moment I gets back to Lyme Regis. There's a wedding I'll have—two post-chaises for Poll and myself, four fiddlers in another! and, shiver my timbers, what a dinner, and oceans of grog, I and my old comrades will swallow."

So inspired was Tom Starling with these ideas, that heaving his hat in the air, he gave such a hearty cheer as startled every inmate of the hotel, the host and hostess rushing out to see what could be the matter.

Our hero having reached his chamber, drew his chair to the table, and commenced an examination of the contents of William Thornback's pocket-book, but anxious, intensely anxious as he was to peruse the papers, he was not then, nor for many a day afterwards, destined to know what it contained, for scarcely had he unclasped the case, when a violent uproar and tumult in the streets, beneath his window, followed by a sharp rattle of musketry, caused him to start from his seat; alarmed at so strange a circumstance at that hour of the night, for it was then past nine o'clock, he ran to the window, and, just as he threw it up, another volley pealed through the air, and shouts, cries, and execrations, mingled with the rattling of the balls against the windows, and smashing the shutters and glass to atoms, left him perfectly astounded. It was not even then quite dark, and, as he looked out, he could see a large body of Vendean troops retreating through the main street, every moment making a stand, and firing a volley at the enemy, who were driving them through the town, while pistol and musket-shots were fired from many of the windows down on the revolutionary soldiers.

Tom Starling rushed into the room, followed by Hannah, half dressed, while the inmates of the hotel were running, frantic with terror, in every direction.

"Oh, sir, come, for God's sake! to Miss Fanny," exclaimed Hannah, breathless with fear, "she is dressed, and in an agony of terror."

Thrusting the pocket-book into his vest, Claude hurried down to the saloon, where he found Fanny, and all the females of the establishment in a state of intense alarm, for the firing, and shouting, and tumult still continued.

"Oh, Claude!" exclaimed the poor girl, just roused from her sleep, after a day of excitement and fatigue—"Oh, Claude! misfortune still pursues us; they say the Revolutionary army has forced the town gates, driving a large body of Vendean troops before them. Hark, oh Heavens!"

And as she spoke, a crash of shutters and glass, filling the room with splinters and fragments, sent the terrified females of the inn shrieking from the apartment.

"Come from the front room, my beloved," said Claude, "at all events, and do not despond—it is terrible!—and you so fatigued and weary; but there is not the danger you apprehend; the two parties are contending for the possession of the town. Even if the Revolutionists gain, they will not injure the inhabitants."

The landlord and his wife, as the firing and shouts grew fainter and fainter, regained courage, and the former, approaching our hero, said—

"I have barricaded all the doors, Monsieur, so that until one party or other gains possession of the two gates, no danger is to be apprehended. I fear the troop the Republican force is driving through the town is that of Mond'Elbee. There were rumours all this morning in the town that General Queteneau had changed his intention, and was marching this way on his road to Thouars—but we did not believe the intelligence. God grant that Colonel D'Arblay's dragoons may not be with them."

"I should say not," answered Claude, "for I have not heard the tramp of horse."

As he spoke, the regular heavy tramp of many men marching in compact order and military array was heard in the street, and then the word of command to halt, broke upon the sudden silence.

Fanny's head drooped upon her lover's shoulder as, bursting into tears, she murmured—

"We are doomed to be separated, dear Claude—may God preserve you!"

As he pressed the weary girl to his heart, and whispered words of love and hope, a loud, thundering summons was heard at the hotel door, and then an authoritative voice, demanding instant admittance.

Tom Starling, who had been inspecting what was going on in the street, called out—

"The whole street, sir, is filled with soldiers. We had better stem out by the back."

"You had better do so, Monsieur," said the landlord, "and get out of the town. The young lady and her attendant will be quite safe with my wife and daughters. She can dress herself like them, and will pass unnoticed; these men will only be quartered on us for a short time. But I must open my doors, they will burst them else."

"Oh, Claude, my beloved Claude!" whispered Fanny, "do fly, and get to Monsieur de la Rochejaquelin. I shall be quite safe with this kind woman and her daughters."

There was not much time for thought, for the landlady, who had learned their situation, implored Claude to escape. The guide would be sure to take him safely from the town, and the lady would be in less danger without him.

Claude could very well imagine that if he remained, and was recognised, he should be at once seized, and his seizure might lead to the recognition of Fanny by some of D'Arblay's dragoons. He therefore resolved to attempt an escape. Taking the pocket-book from his breast, he gave it to Fanny, saying—

"Keep this, dearest, about your person—in it is that important document that was concealed in the cave by George Thornback, and taken from thence by his dastardly brother. You will never be subjected to the indignity of a search, even if you are discovered to be English. I might be taken, and, if so, should assuredly be searched, and thus lose these important papers. The principal villain is dead; therefore, all you have to fear is temporary detention, from which, if I escape, I will release you. Ah! they have entered the house."

They had reached the back premises, and could hear the tumult raging in front.

"Oh, my God!" exclaimed Fanny, "if I had only the strength and power to fly with you, my own Claude."

Pressing her to his heart, Claude, with a sigh, consigned her to the care of the warm-hearted landlady and her daughters, and then, followed by Tom Starling and the guide, passed into the garden, scaled the walls, and dropped down into a deserted lane leading into the interior of the town—while Fanny, dejected and overcome with fatigue, followed the good landlady into their private apartments, the rest of the mansion being occupied by the officers and soldiers of General Queteneau's army. Two thousand men had entered the town, and six thousand more were on the march, the whole proceeding to invest Thouars; the advanced regiments, about a league from the town, had encountered the small force of Monsieur D'Elbee and Monsieur De Lescure, whom they had hotly pursued through the town, coming in at one gate, and retreating through the other, thus gaining, with a very trifling loss, the intricate country on the other side.

The advanced force was commanded by Lieutenant-General Marce, who had fled, with his fugitive troops, into the district where General Queteneau was encamped. The latter suddenly altered his intended route, sent on General Marce, himself following with his principal force, determined to take Thouars, and there concentrate his forces.

General Marce was neither a fierce nor cruel commander. Although smarting under the sense of his surprise and defeat by Henri de la Rochejaquelin, he had no intention of making the inhabitants of Landri pay the penalty. Having driven out the insurgents, he quietly quartered his men in the houses most capable of containing them, himself and his staff occupying the principal hotel, where the English party had rested, but offering no molestation to its inmates; therefore Fanny, somewhat relieved, and only apprehensive for her beloved Claude, was able to retire to rest, of which she was, in truth, much in need; the exertions she had made, and the trial she had experienced the previous day, having quite overcome her powers of endurance. But the next day showed how fortunate had been Claude's departure, for early in the morning Colonel D'Ar-

blay entered the town with his regiment of dragoons, he, himself, and several of the troop, quartering themselves in the same hotel with General Marce. When our heroine heard of his arrival she trembled from head to foot, for though they had not met, she felt satisfied he would at once detect her or Hannah as not being French; she therefore resolved to keep close to her chamber till the Revolutionary army had left. But poor Fanny was discovered through a means she little thought of.

About an hour after the arrival of D'Arblay's dragoons, there was observed to be a considerable commotion amongst the dragoons attending to their horses in the hotel stables, and two of the men at once had communication with their colonel; the consequence was, that Monsieur Suffren, the landlord, was summoned into the presence of General Marce and Colonel D'Arblay.

"You have in your stables, Monsieur Suffren," said Colonel D'Arblay, sternly, "two horses and two mules; pray, where are the two Englishmen that owned those horses, and also the two females that travelled on the mules? Take care, sir, how you reply," fiercely added the Colonel, his face flushing with passion; "for you cannot presume to say the animals came into your stables of their own accord; and let me warn you, if you attempt to disguise the truth, you will be treated as a traitor to the republic of France. Those d——d English rebels have shot three of the dragoons of my regiment, besides slaying their officer, and it is well known that after their release from the prison of Doué, they fought in the ranks of the rebels; so now you know the ticklish situation in which you stand. Already you and your townfolk are suspected as favouring the insurrection. I again warn you to take care lest you incur the penalty. The fugitives assuredly will, if taken, be shot without ceremony."

Monsieur Suffren grew very pale as Colonel D'Arblay spoke, General Marce, sitting apparently unconcerned, looking out of the window.

The landlord was a kind-hearted man, a fond husband and father, and a thorough Royalist in his heart; but yet to brave the fate threatened him for perfect strangers, not even his countrymen, appeared want of consideration for

his wife and family. He therefore resolved to tell the truth, and yet endeavour to protect Miss Fleetwood.

"Well, Colonel," said Monsieur Suffren, speaking boldly, and yet very respectfully, "I have no wish to hide the truth, because when I received those persons into my hotel, I could not be aware that they had committed the acts you mention."

"Bah," fiercely interrupted the Colonel, "you knew they were English—we are at war with England, therefore you must have known they were escaped prisoners. However, answer me briefly, where are they?"

"I suppose concealed somewhere in the town, Colonel," returned the host of the "Lily of France," "for I can take my oath the moment they heard the general's summons at my door, they escaped."

"They," repeated the Colonel with a sneer, and a terrible frown, "the two men might; but do you pretend to say," and he fixed his eyes steadily on the alarmed Monsieur Suffren, "that the two females left your house with them?"

"*Corbleu*, Colonel," interrupted General Marce, with a good-humoured laugh, turning round and regarding the innkeeper with a smile; "you would make a first-rate lawyer; you will frighten Monsieur Suffren into doing an ungallant action. If the men have escaped, and I dare say they have, for it would have been madness to run the risk of staying in this house after our entry, you surely do not want to wage war with women. Those poor girls must be frightened out of their little wits as it is, without further adding to their alarm. You had better send and have a strict search made through the town, for if this Captain, I forget his name, gets amongst the insurgents, he may do us mischief, for I have seen and felt his performance in fighting; but as to the women, let them alone, Colonel. *Diable*, I do not like to see young girls, and pretty ones as I have heard they are, frightened or injured."

"Oh, your name is famous, General," retorted D'Arblay with a half sneer, "for gallantry and devotion to the fair sex; but in this case I act from a sense of duty. This English girl, for there is only one—the other is her domestic—is a kind of ward of my wife's. She is a rich heiress,

and my wife is distracted at her eloping with this scheming English adventurer, and I wish to place her under her protection again."

"Well, *corbleu*, I cannot say she has bad taste," said the General, rising, "for I saw this English captain close enough, and he is as fine and handsome a fellow as ever I beheld, and I heard that he defended his yacht in a most extraordinary manner against the corvette *Legère*; but do as you think proper, Colonel, only if you do recover your good lady's ward, treat her gently."

The General was about to leave the room when the door opened, and Fanny Fleetwood, her face flushed with excitement, but with a calm and steady step, entered, while Madame Suffren and one of her daughters and Hannah stood without, pale and trembling. General Marce drew back, struck with surprise and admiration of the lovely girl before him, while Colonel D'Arblay, with his eyes sparkling with rage, for he somehow anticipated and guessed the young lady's intention, was advancing to take her by the arm.

But Fanny, with a look of scorn, turned from him, and advancing, said to General Marce—

"Pardon me, General, for thus intruding; but I have overheard all that has been said. This kind woman trembled for her husband's life. I could not bear to think either should suffer on my account—I, therefore, insisted on coming here; but hearing the false statement——"

"Take care, young lady, take care," interrupted Colonel D'Arblay, furious with passion; "how dare you to assert I made any false statement?"

"Nay, Colonel D'Arblay," said General Marce, a gentleman in every respect, and though from principle joining the Revolutionists, yet widely differing from them in carrying out their ends, "Nay, Colonel D'Arblay, you are not going, I hope, to challenge this young lady;" and taking Fanny's fair, small hand, he led her to a seat, saying—"My dear young lady, you speak our language so charmingly, that really I almost doubt your being the runaway the Colonel speaks of. I beg you to be under no apprehension either for yourself or Monsieur Suffren; he could not act otherwise, as a Frenchman, than he has."

"And pray, General," asked Colonel D'Arblay, master-

ing, with exceeding difficulty, his rage and vexation, "what is to be done with this young lady, since you refuse to restore her to the protection of my wife?"

"I have refused no such thing, Colonel," replied the General; "I will leave it to this young lady to decide; for I do not think the revolutionary army of France will gain laurels by capturing young maidens."

"No," muttered the Colonel between his teeth, though it reached the ears of General Marce; "no, nor in one thousand two hundred men running away from a handful of rebels."

The General turned round somewhat pale, but perfectly calm, and laying his hand on D'Arblay's shoulder, said in a low voice—

"As a simple gentleman, I shall require an explanation of that sentence another time. At present, sir, as our swords are wanted for our country, I pass it by; but as to this young lady, till Madame D'Arblay herself comes to claim her, she shall remain under my protection."

Colonel D'Arblay bit his lip till the blood flowed, but he merely remarked—

"'Tis well, General; a higher tribunal shall judge between your conduct and mine," and turning on his heel, he left the saloon.

Fanny had listened in trembling apprehension, and as she heard the words of General Marce, she murmured to herself—

"Am I always destined to bring into trouble those who are generous enough to protect me?"

As soon as Colonel D'Arblay quitted the room, the General seated himself beside her, and in a gentle, kind manner, said—

"Now, my dear young lady, tell me candidly and without fear how you are situated, and what claim Madame D'Arblay has to advance concerning you."

"No claim whatever, General," returned Fanny, and then in simple, but convincing language, she briefly related the connection between her and Madame D'Arblay, and her reason for flying from the Chateau Bois-Philibert. She also told of her accidental meeting with her lover, to whom she stated, her cheek flushing as she spoke, she had been betrothed from her earliest years. General Marce listener

with great interest and attention. He was a most kind and affectionate husband and father.

"My poor child," said the general, tenderly, "you have suffered much—I understand it all; and I may say to you, I feel rejoiced that Monsieur Tregannon has escaped; I would not for any consideration that he fell into my hands; for great as is the interest you have excited in me for him, I could not refuse to do my duty. The conduct of Colonel D'Arblay is infamous, and to me somewhat mysterious; but I will protect you as long as it is in my power to do so. At present you had better keep yourself confined to the private apartments of Madame Suffren, till the arrival of the General-in-Chief Queteneau, who is a kind, noble, and conscientious man, but a firm and steadfast upholder of the infant Republic of France.

Fanny, grateful for the kindness and generosity of General Marce, expressed herself to that effect, and the French commander, respectfully kissing her hand, consigned her to the care of the delighted Madame Suffren.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

LEAVING the shores of France, we must request our readers to return with us to England. Some six months after the departure of the *Surinam* for India, Sir Charles Treacastle's London attorney received a letter from a Mr. Fleeceall, also an attorney, but one of a widely different class. We shall not trouble our readers with the entire contents of the letter. It will be sufficient to say, that on the part of Sir James Tregannon, of Tregannon Park, Cornwall, &c., he required to see by what right Sir Charles Treacastle held the Pentoven estate, as Sir James Tregannon laid claim to all property left by the late Sir Claude Tregannon, as heir at law.

As Mr. Topsham was not very well acquainted with either the Tregannon property or Sir Charles's rights, merely acting for him in business connected with the mines, he at once wrote to Mr. Vigors, at Truro.

"Ha!" muttered Mr. Vigors, when he read the London attorney's letter, "he's found out the flaw in the title,

and we cannot oppose his right till the Tregannon case comes into court. I'am getting rather uneasy about this affair. The Surinam cannot be back under eight or ten months, if so soon. However, I must consult with Sir Charles."

Bnt Mr. Vigors was destined to be more astonished before the week was expired, for on his return from Tre-castle, he was visited by Mr. Treestrail, who, with a look of great consternation, informed him that he had received notice from the mortgagees of the Tregannon estate to quit the mansion, and give up the land on the twenty-ninth of next September, as Sir James Tregannon had resolved to return to England, the state of affairs in France preventing his remaining in that country, and also that he intended to reside in the mansion of Tregannon.

Mr. Vigors was astounded; he looked at Mr. Treestrail with a rather puzzled expression of countenance, saying,—

"Upon my honour, the plot thickens. James Tregannon must have contrived to buy off the evidence of Trelawney, the Leeds' constable."

"I heard in Falmouth, yesterday," said Mr Treestrail, "that he has been dead some months, and that he died very suddenly."

"Humph! that accounts for this sudden resolution of returning to England. However, I am to meet Sir Charles in London early next week. We must do all we can to delay this question of right to the Pentoven estate and arrears. You, of course, my dear sir, must give up the house at once, as that is in your agreement with the mortgagees. I wonder how the deuce James Tregannon raised the money to satisfy the creditors; though, to be sure, if his attorney, who, by the way, is a dangerous fellow, knows that Sir Charles has no real claim to the Pentoven estate, he would find little difficulty in raising the residue of the mortgagees' claims. However, till we have a consultation in London, we cannot presume to speak definitely on the subject."

Sir Charles Treecastle and his lady, with Mary Tregannon, proceeded to London, intending to pass some time there, having purchased a very handsome mansion in ——— Square, leaving its furniture and decorations to the taste and skill of a fashionable upholsterer. Having established

his family in their new mansion, Sir Charles, who felt considerable uneasiness about his situation with respect to the Pentoven estate, hastened to call on Mr. Saunders, and to meet by appointment there his own solicitor, Mr. Vigors.

"Well, Sir Charles," said Mr. Saunders, shaking his friend's hand, "I see we must be stirring ourselves, for the enemy is in the field, determined to push his claims to the utmost. But do you know who's dead?"

"Dead!" repeated Sir Charles. "No—I trust no one that I have an esteem for."

"Well, I do not think there is any regret to be felt by any one for the defunct, for I never yet heard that he performed a good action. I mean Curtis Bond—he died this morning."

"God bless me! Curtis Bond dead!" said Sir Charles. "Why I never heard that he was ill. How remarkably sudden!"

"You may say fairly that he killed himself," said Mr. Saunders. "Four or five days ago, it seems, he was in Lyme Regis, looking over and receiving the rents of the Grange estate. You know the extraordinary miserly disposition of Mr. Bond. He actually started from Lyme Regis on the outside of the Axminster stage, and travelled the whole way to London, amidst a relentless torrent of rain. On reaching his house, he was seized with a severe shivering, went to bed, but obstinately refused all medical advice till too late; and when told his recovery was hopeless, he ordered the doctor to leave the house, and shortly after sent for his lawyer, Mr. Turnbull, and, I heard, made a will, but first had a long conference with a clergyman. He lingered through the night, and this morning expired about nine o'clock."

"Well, really, I feel some regret," said Sir Charles, "at his death. He had few amiable qualities, I know; and yet I have heard he performed some strange eccentric benevolent acts—few and far between certainly. He had the power, had he not, of willing away the Grange estates? He must have been worth an immense fortune besides. I have heard it said Lord Penchurch would be his heir."

"It's very possible," said Mr. Saunders; "and a pretty scapegrace he is to inherit such a fortune. But now let us talk over our own affairs," said the lawyer.

It is not necessary to inflict upon our readers the dull details of intricate law matters. It is quite sufficient to say, that Sir Charles placed the whole matter in the hands of Mr. Saunders and Mr. Vigors, to proceed in the case in the best manner they could, and to employ the first counsel in the metropolis, and in every possible manner dispute the claims of James Tregannon, and gain time till the return, if possible, of Claude Tregannon from India.

Sir Charles Treacastle then proceeded to the mansion of Mr. Fleetwood; he found the old gentleman in the most exuberant spirits.

"How rejoiced I am to see you, my dear Sir Charles," exclaimed the worthy merchant. "I would have written to you this very night, for this morning I received news, from a ship leaving Calcutta, as she ran up the Hooghley. She spoke the Surinam, and learned the glorious intelligence that the vessel was attacked by a French corvette full of men, and carrying heavy metal, but after a splendid action of forty-five minutes, the French corvette struck her colours to the Surinam. The commander carried his prize with him to Calcutta. He is a glorious fellow, by Jove he is! Well may my little Fan be proud of her lover—eh, Sir Charles?" and the old gentleman, in a state of great excitement, declared he would have given two thousand pounds to have been on board the Surinam.

"This is good news, indeed," said Sir Charles, well pleased himself at his brother-in-law's gallantry. "This will put my sister-in-law, Mary, in great spirits. She sent her love to you, and will come to see you to-morrow. She is determined, now Fanny is away, to make a conquest of you."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the merchant, merrily. "I know where those bright eyes of hers have done a world of mischief; and next to my little Fan, she is the brightest and fairest maiden within twenty miles of the sound of Bow bells."

"By-the-bye, did you hear," observed Sir Charles, after some conversation relative to Claude Tregannon's claims, "that Curtis Bond is dead?"

"That is the man that turned your brother-in-law out of Grange House, when almost dead of fever—eh?—he ought to have died long ago, the miserable, miserly fellow,"

continued the old gentleman, with a look of disgust. "I wanted to purchase that Grange property from him, but the answer he gave my lawyer was, that if I were to give him ten thousand pounds more than it was worth, I should not have it. What the deuce did I ever do to him—eh?"

Sir Charles smiled at the worthy merchant's vivacity, and after some further conversation took his leave, promising to dine with him the next day, with Lady Treacastle and Mary, when they could have a long chat to themselves on family matters.

On his return home, Sir Charles found the Honourable Frederick Delaware sitting with Lady Treacastle and Mary.

"So Mr. Curtis Bond is dead," said Frederick Delaware to Sir Charles. "I have been puzzling my brain to make out who he has left his large property to. I have found out already that Lord Penchurch is mistaken in supposing that he is the lucky man. I heard also that he had the power to will the Grange estate, being the last in the entail. I remember Lord Penchurch saying he would have the Grange estate, and no thanks to his miserly cousin; but he is quite mistaken."

"Well, you have roused my curiosity," said Sir Charles, "for the property is very large, and I do not know any blood relative he has except Lady Penchurch. We shall hear to-morrow or next day. By-the-bye, Mary, I have promised that we shall all dine with that worthy soul, Mr. Fleetwood—and you, Delaware, will find an invitation when you go home. You are a most especial favourite of his; he intends asking you to his wedding when he obtains Mary's consent."

"Ha," said Frederick Delaware, with a merry laugh, while Mary's cheek crimsoned, "I will surely attend, for I intend requesting him to confer the same favour on me."

Sir Charles saw by Mary's colour, and the smile on Lady Treacastle's features, that something not very disagreeable to any of the party present had occurred; but a look from Mary satisfied him, and, changing the subject, he mentioned what Mr Fleetwood told him of Claude Tregannon's capture of the French corvette.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Frederick Delaware, with enthusiasm, "I knew if ever he had an opportunity he would distinguish himself. I glory in Claude's success."

A bright and affectionate smile from Mary rewarded Frederick Delaware for his speech; in fact, he had that very morning pressed his suit with her, and so successfully, that he succeeded in gaining an answer, which, though not perhaps quite so favourable as he could have wished, was still delightful to a fond lover. Mary had consented to be his on the return of her brother from India.

Whilst sitting at breakfast the following morning, Sir Charles received a note from a Mr. Turnbull, a solicitor of good name and practice, requesting the favour of his attendance at the mansion of the late Curtis Bond, Esq., at four o'clock on the following day, to hear the will of the deceased gentleman read.

"God bless my soul," said the Baronet, looking at Lady Treastle, and then reading aloud the note, "this is curious enough. I never was on terms of intimacy with the late Mr. Bond; I have met him several times, but in a distant, formal kind of way."

"Perhaps he has left you a legacy," said Mary.

"If he has left Claude one, after his cruel conduct to him, there would be some sign to be seen that he possessed human feelings before he left this world. All his life he was an extraordinary, eccentric man," said Sir Charles Treastle. "Yesterday evening, at the club, I heard some gentlemen, who knew him well, speaking of some acts of his, disclosing extraordinary meanness one moment, and the next actually performing a munificent act; and finally sacrificing his life to save two or three paltry pounds; and even when a doctor might have saved him, he refused to pay the fee of a guinea."

Somewhat curious to hear the will of the late Curtis Bond, Esq., Sir Charles Treastle proceeded to the mansion of the deceased, and was shown into a large and spacious drawing-room, containing very old and neglected furniture. There was an air of singular decay and melancholy about the whole premises. The deceased kept but two servants, a very old dame, and as ancient a male domestic. He rarely ate or drank at home; in fact, few knew where he ate his meals. It was thought he indulged in but one in the twenty-four hours, and that of a very frugal description.

On entering the room, Sir Charles perceived three gen-

tllemen; two were strangers, the other was Mr. Turnbull. The next moment Lord Penchurch, in deep mourning, entered. With a haughty and supercilious bow, he passed Sir Charles, who scarcely noticed his salute. He perceived that Lord Penchurch's look, when he entered the room, was one of considerable annoyance, for, on approaching Mr. Turnbull, he said something in a low voice, with his eyes fixed on Sir Charles. Mr. Turnbull's answer Sir Charles heard.

"Such were my instructions, my lord."

The other two gentlemen were introduced to the Baronet; they were very distant connections of the late Curtis Bond.

After a few preliminary observations, Mr. Turnbull produced the will, which was of extremely small dimensions, and breaking the seal, he read its contents in a clear, calm tone.

After the usual preliminary remarks contained in all wills, it went on as follows:—

"To John Walters, Esquire, of Sion House, Lincolnshire, I bequeath the sum of four thousand pounds, because he never expected a shilling of me, and never once troubled me with a visit, nor claimed relationship; for the same reasons, I bequeath the sum of four thousand pounds to James St. George, Esquire, of the county of Middlesex; to Harriet Rees and David Hotman, my domestics, I leave the sum of six hundred pounds each.

"To my esteemed cousin, Lord Augustus Penchurch, I bequeath my blessing, he having refused my advice; nevertheless, I strongly recommend him to alter his course of life. I do not bequeath him gold, because I never knew his lordship had any regard how he used it."

Mr. Turnbull read these words in a hesitating sort of tone, with a side glance at his lordship, who, though his face was flushed with inward rage and mortification, uttered not a word. Mr. Turnbull continued—

"Being convinced, in this my last hour, that I committed an act of great injustice and cruelty to one deserving better treatment at my hands, and wishing to show my sincere repentance for having acted as I did, and also con-

vinced that I could not do better with my wealth, I bequeath to Henry Claude Tregannon, only son and heir of the late Sir Henry Claude Tregannon, of Tregannon Park, Cornwall, the entire residue of my property, lands, houses, and tenements, &c., &c. And I appoint Sir Charles Treacastle, of Treacastle, and Mr. Thomas Turnbull, of the city of London, solicitor, to be my executors; and, as a token of my regard, I bequeath to each of them the sum of five thousand pounds. But should the said Henry Claude Tregannon have ceased to exist, then the property bequeathed to him shall go to the crown."

Sir Charles Treacastle had listened to the reading of this singular will with great surprise. As Mr. Turnbull finished, there was a dead silence, during which Lord Penchurch rose from his seat, and, pausing a moment before he quitted the room, said—

"My worthy cousin has left a will behind him which will convince the world, who might have doubted the fact before, that a lunatic asylum ought to have been his domicile many years back. At all events, it is a good windfall for the crown, as no such person exists as Henry Claude Tregannon, unless, indeed, the crown permits the offspring of a gipsy to dispute its rights."

Sir Charles Treacastle was a quiet, peaceably-disposed man, not at all a person to be discomposed by the words of his disappointed and enraged lordship, who immediately quitted the room.

Mr. Turnbull, turning to Sir Charles, said—

"I expected some such scene, and would willingly have prevented the late Mr. Bond from inserting those lines; but he seemed excited when I opposed it, and, not wishing to irritate him in his last hour, I wrote as he dictated."

"What can Lord Penchurch mean," asked Mr. Walters, "by saying there is no such person as Henry Claude Tregannon? I certainly never, I think, heard the name myself. Living in a county remote from Cornwall, the name is strange to me, though I have some faint recollection of seeing or hearing, some years ago, of some tragical event in Cornwall happening to a person of a name like Tregannon—most likely it was Tregannon."

"It is too long a story, Mr. Walters," said Sir Charles, "to tell you all; but I will give you a brief outline; in fact, till the case comes before a court, there is no Henry Claude Tregannon."

Both Mr. Walters and Mr. St. George looked surprised; but Sir Charles contrived, in a very few minutes, to make them understand the facts of the case.

"You will now, no doubt, be opposed by the crown," said Mr. Turnbull.

"The case must come to a hearing shortly," said Sir Charles, "till then it is useless surmising; at all events, the late Mr. Bond has acted with great generosity towards my brother-in-law, and has, as far as money goes, made most ample amends for his previous singular conduct."

"I remarked to him," said Mr. Turnbull "when he dictated this will, that I was not aware that the late Sir Henry Claude Tregannon had left a son; for it was a nephew that succeeded to the title and property. He replied, speaking with difficulty and at intervals: 'That he knew better—that James Tregannon, as he called himself, had no claim to the property or title, and that the right heir would soon come to his own.'"

After some further conversation the party separated, and Sir Charles proceeded to consult with Mr. Saunders. Two or three weeks passed in active exertions to bring the case of Henry Claude Tregannon into court, and finally a day was appointed for the opening of the suit, which by this time had excited considerable interest and curiosity in the higher circles. Before that day of trial, Sir James Tregannon and his lady arrived in England, and proceeded at once to Tregannon Park.

Such was the state of affairs at the period of the capture of the *Water Witch*, on her return voyage, by the French corvette *Légeré*.

CHAPTER XL.

CLAUDE TREGANNON, as he descended from the wall of the garden of the 'Lily of France' into the lane beneath, felt acute distress of mind at leaving his beloved Fanny in

such peril, though he knew well, right well, that he could do her no possible good by remaining, but that, on the contrary, his presence would undoubtedly lead to the detention of both, whereas left under the care of the landlady, it was possible for her to escape observation.

As they proceeded along the lane, our hero perceived that the guide carried a coil of rope, and on inquiring the reason, was told that they must scale the walls of the town, for no doubt both gates were guarded by the Revolutionary soldiers.

"The walls are not high," said Gourtrand, the guide, "and the fosse is nearly dry."

It was a clear, fine night, and as they passed out of the lane into the street, they encountered numbers of persons passing in and out of their houses in considerable excitement; however, they gained a part of the wall in a somewhat ruinous state, and passing the rope through an old ring, they descended easily, pulling the rope, which was long enough to double down, after them; crossing the old dry moat half filled with rubbish, they made for the wood that backed the town.

"You see, sir," said the guide, "the best plan for you to follow, will be to get to the next hamlet, and keep close in one of the villager's cottages for a few days. I will return to the town in the morning. No human being will heed me, and I will stay and watch the result; and when General Marce leaves the place, which he must do in a day or so, I will return and let you know how mademoiselle is, and when it will be safe for you to rejoin her."

Claude thought this an exceedingly good plan, and they proceeded at a rapid pace—for the guide was well acquainted with the country—to a hamlet about seven miles from the town they had left; there was a small cabaret in the village, the inmates of which Gourtrand felt very little compunction in rousing from their slumber. Our hero was by no means particular as to accommodation, and the poor girl roused from her bed did all she could, without asking any questions, to arrange the only spare room they possessed, while the guide and Tom Starling, after drinking a bottle of wine, were quite content with a shake down of clean straw in a cow-house at the back.

Two or three days passed tediously with our hero, and

his attendant, Tom, who, however, tried to console himself during his confinement by making love to the aubergiste's daughter, a very rosy-faced, good-humoured damsel, to whom Tom's attempts at French afforded such infinite amusement, that he abandoned his *parlez vous*, and took to a more energetic language, for which he was rewarded by a sound box on the ear.

The sixth day Claude beheld with considerable anxiety the guide approach the auberge, and guessed by his features, as he entered the room, that he had important intelligence to communicate.

"Well, Gourtrand," he exclaimed, "let me hear your adventures, for I am all anxiety, but first say, did you see mademoiselle? is she safe?"

"I did see her, monsieur, but not to speak to her. She is well, but let me tell you the strange news I have heard—in the first place, Colonel D'Arblay is dead."

"Dead! good God!" cried our hero, "how, and in what manner—for he surely did not die a natural death."

"No, monsieur, that he did not—from what I could learn, it seems, he insulted General Marce a few days before in private, and afterwards before General Queteneau, who arrived the morning after our departure, and most of the officers of the regiments in the town; he grossly insinuated that General Marce was a coward, and lost a battle and nine pieces of artillery by running away from a handful of men. The consequence was, that a meeting took place with swords, and General Marce mortally wounded the colonel in the encounter, being also severely wounded himself. I learned from the landlord, that the colonel did not die for several hours, and that he had an interview with General Queteneau before he expired. A messenger was at once dispatched to Bois-Philibert for Madame D'Arblay, who arrived yesterday."

"Then madame is with mademoiselle," said Claude Tregannon.

"*Oui*, Monsieur, and the Colonel was buried this morning with military honours; and about two o'clock the whole force were under arms, and marched from the town. I saw Madame D'Arblay and mademoiselle enter a close caleche, drawn by two mules and escorted by a troop of horse. All the landlord could make out was, that Madame

D'Arblay and Mademoiselle were to proceed to Thouars, where the whole of General Queteneau's army is quartered, and from some secret source he had also gained intelligence that the four great Vendean chiefs had united their forces, and intended attacking the army of General Queteneau, even within the strong walls of Thouars."

Claude was perfectly astounded at this intelligence, and for several minutes remained immersed in thought. At length rousing himself, he said to Gourtrand—

"Where do you suppose the army of Monsieur La Rochejaquelin is?"

"It is said, or conjectured, the united army of the Vendéans is at Bressure."

"Then the best thing we can do," observed our hero, "is to set out at once, and join Monsieur La Rochejaquelin. If they intend attacking Thouars, and they succeed, mademoiselle may be restored to liberty."

"I was just going to propose that you should do so, monsieur; they will surely take Thouars, for I hear our leaders have thirty thousand men under their command."

"Is Thouars a strong place, Gourtrand?" questioned our hero.

"It has a terrible strong castle, monsieur," said the guide, "built on a rock, its walls are one hundred and twenty feet high. The river Thoue nearly surrounds the town—the bridges will be fiercely defended there's no doubt, but our men will carry every thing before them, I feel sure."

"I suppose, as we have lost our horses," said Claude Tregannon, "we must get over the ground on foot; how many leagues do you count it to Bressure?"

"Nine leagues, monsieur," replied the guide, "we can, no doubt, hire horses at the next town; our own were taken possession of by D'Arblay's dragoons."

"It is not worth while," returned Tregannon, "if we start very early, we can reach Bressure very easily by two o'clock."

Accordingly, shortly after sunrise, our hero and his two attendants left the little cabaret, and stopping but once to refresh themselves on the road, they came within sight of Bressure a little before three o'clock. Bressure was then a walled town, and on approaching the gates they were

stopped and questioned by the Vendean guard stationed there. Gourtrand soon gained admission, and obtained directions to the quarters occupied by Henri de la Rochejaquelin and his troops.

The young Vendean leader embraced our hero, on his arrival, with real brotherly affection, and assigned him an apartment in the large mansion he himself occupied. The town was crowded with the army of the Vendean chiefs, and every moment was adding to their numbers, whilst the greatest excitement prevailed throughout. Cockades and sashes were being manufactured night and day, by the females of the place, for the whole army was to march upon Thouars in a few days.

It was not till late in the evening that the two young men had a quiet hour to themselves, for La Rochejaquelin was occupied with his troops and their arms every moment of the day; but having supped at a late hour, they were able to have a few hours' conversation to themselves, over a bottle or two of excellent wine.

La Rochejaquelin listened with extreme interest to our hero's recital.

"Well, please God, in a day or two," observed the Vendean chief, when Claude had finished his story, "we shall be able to release your lady-love once more. We must take Thouars and defeat Queteneau before the grand army comes up from Paris, or else it will be all up in La Vendée. We heard of D'Arblay's death yesterday, and no one expressed any regret. I assure you, his regiment is notorious for cruelty. General Marce is a brave man, and was not to blame for the panic that seized his soldiers, who were not very experienced in our mode of warfare. I am rejoiced that he has taken your fair lady under his protection, and I do not think that Madame D'Arblay need, or indeed will grieve over her husband's death, for he was a bad and vicious man in private life. It must be a great consolation to Miss Fleetwood to have her old and dear friend with her."

"It delighted me to hear that such was the case," replied our hero, "though it grieved me at first to think how afflicting it must be to her, so lately re-united to her husband, to be separated for ever. But now tell me, Henri, what force have you with which to attack so strong a place

as Thouars, especially when held by such an army as General Queteneau has under his command?"

"Oh, we have a strong force—nearly thirty thousand men," said Rochejaquelin, "Messieurs de Bonchamps, D'Elbee, and Lescure have joined their troops to those of Cathelineau and Stofflet, so that united we are a formidable force. The nine pieces of artillery we took from General Marce, are invaluable, and I feel so rejoiced, *mon cher*," continued La Rochejaquelin, "that we shall have your strong arm to assist us."

"I assure you," returned Tregannon, "but that I must remain unfettered, I would, with heart and soul, give you my assistance to the end; as it is, I must be content to fight by your side when you advance upon Thouars, and I trust, for more reasons than one, to see victory on our side."

Two days after this conversation the Vendean army marched out of Bressure, singing songs of enthusiasm; arriving before Thouars on the third of the month, and prepared for the assault on the fourth.

Claude Tregannon passed the night of the third without sleep, to him the morrow was fraught with vital importance. To lose the battle was to lose all; for it was impossible to conjecture what might be the future fate of Fanny if not released from the hands of the Revolutionists. The real reign of terror had commenced, and should the revolutionary commissioners once get her into their power, in their hatred of England and all aristocrats, her life might, like many others equally innocent, be sacrificed.

The Vendean army possessed neither tents nor baggage, wrapt in their rough mantles or coats, they lay down and reposed on the spot where they halted, taking, however, the precaution to send out men to act as advanced posts. No other care was taken. Henri La Rochejaquelin and Claude Tregannon lay in the midst of their men, conversing through the hours of the night. As soon as day broke our hero sprang to his feet, and gazed around him with a sensation of singular awe and excitement. He stood in the midst of thirty thousand men, with the morning light just showing their sleeping forms, stretched out without much order or regularity as to military array; numbers were rising and looking to their arms, others already commencing their

simple breakfast—the last meal to hundreds of those now living before him.

Henri de la Rochejaquelin had moved in amidst his men—talking familiarly to all, laughing gaily with some—and finally joining a group of the chiefs, assembled round the Vendean banner.

In the distance, as he looked across the plain, he could distinctly see the town and castle of Thouars.

“By the pipers of war, your honour,” said Tom Starling, coming up with a large basket on his arm, “I have managed to make out a breakfast anyhow.”

So saying, Tom sat down, and very scientifically spread a cloth upon the sod, on which he placed a couple of fowls, a piece of beef, and bread and wine, and two cups.

“There’s no fighting, your honour,” continued Tom, “with your lockers empty. A ship well balasted stands to her canvass like a crutch.”

“I allow that, Tom,” replied our hero; “nevertheless, my appetite is small this morning; but eat we must, to enable us to go through our work. Where did you get the fowls? I fancy they are the only ones in the camp.”

Tom laughed.

“Why, your honour, I must confess these worthy Vendean don’t feed well. Barley bread, a queer kind of white cheese, and sour wine is their mess; so, yesterday, I begged a pair of fowls as we marched through a large village, and last night I plucked and boiled them; the piece of beef, Monsieur Henri provided, and here he comes. The play will begin soon, your honour; I will stick close to you, sir, if you have no objection.”

“None whatever, Tom; and I trust, in the mercy of Providence, to take us safe through the trial before us.”

Monsieur De Lescure joined the young men at their morning meal; he shook Claude heartily by the hand, expressing his regret at the *contre temps* he had experienced by the sudden and unexpected advance of General Marce; he himself had had a very narrow escape of being cut to pieces, and was forced back through the town, with the loss of a few men; the nature of the country where he came suddenly upon the force of General Marce not permitting him to retreat any other way. “But we will, please God, drive them out of Thouars this day.” Two hours after the

morning meal, the whole army was in motion, under the command of its several leaders. Though not in uniform, or possessed of musical instruments, the Vendean army offered an imposing appearance, as it advanced across the plain towards Thouars. A long and narrow bridge, defended by a formidable body of troops, led by General Marce, crossed the deep waters of the Thoue. Henri de la Rochejaqueelin, and Monsieur de Lescure, led the advance body, flanked by the nine pieces of artillery.

The Vendean commenced the attack with a sharp cannonade directed against the bridge; but so destructive was the return fire from the Republican soldiers, that the assailants fell back.

"Now Henri—now or never!" exclaimed our hero, greatly excited, for he saw that unless one of the chiefs set the example and made a push, all would be lost; and waving his sword, he called out, in a loud voice, "Follow, brave Vendean, and the bridge is ours!"

And springing forward, he made for the pass, amidst a shower of iron hail, with Tom Starling by his side, waving his cutlass, and tossing his hat, with a loud cheer, into the air. The effect was electric. Henri de la Rochejaqueelin and Monsieur de Lescure the next moment followed, and then a tremendous rush was made at the bridge. The Republicans wavered, and, after a short conflict, turned and retreated into the town. As Claude Tregannon, sword in hand, crossed the bridge, he perceived an officer in a general's uniform, contending, with his sword in his left hand, with several of the Vendean peasants; the next moment would have been his last, had not our hero, conjecturing it was General Marce, rushed in between him and his enemies, and, with some difficulty, saved him just as he was beaten to the earth.

The French general rose, pale and exhausted, gave his sword to Claude Tregannon, saying, as he looked with surprise into his face—

"This is the second time, Monsieur, that I have had the misfortune to be routed and defeated by your assistance. I saw you advance alone; but had you wavered five minutes longer, you would never have carried the bridge; a reinforcement of artillery was on its way."

"'Tis the fortune of war," returned our hero.

"You are the English Captain, are you not?" demanded the General, as they walked together towards the spot where the Vendéans had halted previous to attacking the town.

"Such is the case, *Monsieur le General*," answered Claude Tregannon; "and permit me, now that I have an opportunity, to thank you for your kindness and generosity to a young English lady, at present, I believe, in *Thouars*."

"You saved my life, *Monsieur*," returned the Frenchman, "and I will tell you what you must do, should you succeed in taking the town, which, however, is doubtful. I am doing no injury to the interests of my country in telling you how that interesting girl is situated."

At this moment *Monsieur D'Elbee* and *Henri de la Rochejaquelin* approached, and, embracing Claude Tregannon, said—

"Your gallantry and courage has gained us this important advance; in another hour we shall attack the town. And then politely taking off their hats to General Marce, they returned him his sword, saying he was a brave and humane man, and that after the taking of the town he was quite at liberty to depart.

General Marce bowed, observing, it gave him much pain to see Frenchmen contending against Frenchmen, instead of turning their united arms against the numerous enemies that threatened the nation.

The two chiefs then left General Marce with our hero, repeating that they were preparing to assault the town in an hour, but that they had no means to effect a breach in the walls, and were obliged to construct temporary ladders.

"They made a monstrous mistake," said General Marce to Tregannon, "in sending us against these Vendean towns without artillery of any calibre. Our guns are nothing; and if they once scale the walls, I fear Queteneau will have to surrender. But permit me, while you have time to listen, to tell you a few particulars:—Before Colonel *D'Arblay* died, he sent for General Queteneau, and informed him that *Mademoiselle* and *Madame D'Arblay* were united with you in carrying on a secret correspondence between England and the Vendéans; and he had the barbarity to denounce them both to two of the revolutionary commissioners as dangerous spies and aristocrats. He said that he

had confined his wife at the Chateau Bois-Philibert, but that both Madame and Miss Fleetwood ought to be sent to Paris, and examined by the tribunal of which Robespierre is the head. I need not tell you, if they were once before that blood-stained judgment-seat, their sentence would be the guillotine."

Claude felt his blood chilled as he exclaimed—

"Heavens! is it possible that any man lying on the bed of death could thus try to destroy his own wife and an innocent, unoffending girl?"

"He was a bad man, Monsieur," returned the French General, "and like many others in these fearful times, a scoffer and disbeliever. However, with this false charge on his lips—he died."

"General Queteneau is a good man and a brave soldier, and probably he would not have heeded the words of Colonel D'Arblay, but the Commissioners, two of those sanguinary wretches the revolution, alas! has given birth to, eagerly noted down the charge, and a troop of dragoons was despatched to the Chateau Bois-Philibert, where they found D'Arblay's unfortunate wife actually confined in a damp, miserable vault, under the charge of a woman named Bonchamps, who is known to be a sister of the notorious Madame L—. When brought to Landri, and told of her husband's death, she was greatly affected. In the meantime, I did all I could to prove to General Queteneau the folly of the charge brought against Madame D'Arblay and the young English lady. The General had a long conversation with Madame, and became fully convinced I was right; she gave him the whole account of how she had passed the last fourteen years of her life, and told how she and Mademoiselle had been captured by the Lègère as they were returning to England; but the Commissioners were dead to all entreaties; and so blinded by fear is every one acting under the rule of Robespierre and his clique, that General Queteneau was forced to submit to their orders, and they accompanied us to Thouars. General Queteneau refused to give them a force to conduct their prisoners to Nantes, and the Commissioners are now waiting for an order from Paris. All I fear is, if they find that the town is likely to fall into the hands of the Vendéans, that they will leave, with a party of D'Arblay's dragoons, who are furious at the loss of

their Colonel, and will make at once for Paris. I do not wish to say more; so, Monsieur, I leave it to your own judgment how to act—I am powerless. Before we came here I did all that was in my power.”

Tregannon pressed General Marce's hand warmly.

“You have acted nobly and humanely, and from my heart I thank you,” he said, fervently. “I must now leave you, I know how to act; we may not meet again, but the memory of your kindness and generosity will never be forgotten.”

CHAPTER XLI.

AFTER a few minutes' conference with La Rochejaquelein and Monsieur Lescure, our hero and his friend Henri, with five hundred men, left the main army, just ready for an assault, and, guided by Gourtrand, repassed the bridge, and making a considerable circuit, gained the other side of the town. At this side the walls were not so formidable, and they actually advanced close up to the gates, sheltered from observation by the lofty hedges that intersected the country. As they paused a moment, they perceived a party of horse, about fifty in number, ride out through the gates, followed by a close carriage drawn by four horses.

“By heavens, you were right, Claude,” said the Vendean chief.

As he spoke, the loud roar of artillery was heard pealing through the air.

“Take one hundred men with you, creep along that meadow with the high hedge, you will cut them off at the foot of the hill. I will scale the walls on this side with these light ladders, and make an attack that will draw off the attention of the besieged; now, lose no time.”

One hundred of the Vendean peasants, with their rifles, eagerly followed our hero, and running rapidly along the meadow, concealed by the high hedges of the Vendée, they arrived at the edge of the main road just as the troop of D'Arblay's dragoons, with the two commissioners riding at each side of the carriage, reached the spot.

“Fire wide of the carriage,” said our hero, giving the

word to fire, and leaping, as he spoke, into the road, followed by Tom, cutlass in hand.

"Blow me if I don't have a horse for the one the rascals robbed me of," shouted the English tar, making a snatch at a dragoon's bridle.

Startled and confounded by this unexpected discharge, which emptied nearly a dozen saddles, the men turned and fled, firing their pistols with but little damage. One of the commissioners, a tall, powerful man, rode up, striking the horses with the flat of his sword, and cursing the postilions for not urging on their horses to a gallop; but Claude Tregannon running up, shot the foremost dead, and the others, becoming entangled, were seized and held by some of the Vendéans. The two commissioners sprang up the hill towards the town, but they fell into a snare, and were shot down by La Rochejaquelin.

The astonishment and rapture of Fanny exceeded belief, when Claude Tregannon threw open the door of the carriage and caught her in his arms. Madame D'Arblay, pale, and looking ill, but calm and collected, could only utter—

"Thank God for this deliverance!"

"I must leave you, my beloved," said Claude, pressing Fanny to his heart; "but you are saved. I must not desert those who have acted so generously towards us. I will leave Tom with fifty of these men to guard you till the town is won."

"Oh, Claude," cried Fanny, clasping her hands, the tears running from her eyes, "you leave me to rush again into danger—oh! my God!"

"I leave you to do my duty; you would not love me, dear one, were I to desert my colours."

The next moment, with the remainder of the men, he was running up the hill, and was in time to ascend the walls with La Rochejaquelin.

Messieurs D'Elbee and Lescure had scaled the walls on the other side, and Henri and our hero, driving the enemy before them, entered the great square, where General Queteau, to save the place from the horrors of a sack, surrendered the town.*

* The town of Thouars was surrendered by General Queteau to the Vendean army, under the leaders above mentioned, on the 4th of May. 179—.

The Vendean leaders and their troops behaved with the greatest moderation; no outrage was committed against the inhabitants. Monsieur Lescure, who greatly respected General Queteneau, having been well treated by him when in his power some months previously, did all he could to persuade him to stay with the Vendean army, to escape the vengeance of the government for surrendering the town; but the General heroically resolved to return to the Republicans, and demand a trial.

Immediately after the surrender by General Queteneau, Claude hastened to conduct Madame D'Arblay and Fanny into the town.

Poor Fanny wept tears of joy when she beheld Claude approaching the carriage, which was drawn up by the side of the road. The Vendean, in the meantime, had captured several horses, and stripped the dead dragoons of their arms and accoutrements.

Thouars was a considerable town, and possessed several large hotels. To one of these Claude conducted his overjoyed Fanny and Madame D'Arblay, where, the following day, they were visited by La Rochejaquelin and Monsieur De Lescure, who congratulated the blushing Fanny upon her escape from the revolutionary commissioners. General Marce also took a kind farewell. Altogether she felt much affected at the noble and generous conduct of all those who had interested themselves in her fate; besides, her heart palpitated with delight at the encomiums and praises bestowed upon her lover.

Madame D'Arblay was resolved to quit France for ever, and return with her pupil and friend to England, for all chance of either recovering her own or her husband's property was out of the question.

The whole country to the sea-coast was now free from the revolutionary army, and our hero determined to lose no more time in journeying to the nearest port in the hands of the Vendean. Rochelle had declared for the Royalists, and Claude Tregannon, who recollected that his captured ship, the *Water Witch*, was in that harbour, spoke to La Rochejaquelin on the subject of purchasing her, and embarking all his crew, whom he expected to find with Mr. Fleetwood, at Olone, waiting his arrival.

"I will see to that at once," said La Rochejaquelin,

"it will be the best plan you can pursue; and in a fast-sailing craft like that, you may easily escape any cruisers on the coast. As to your purchasing her, if she is still there, we cannot think of any such thing. You and your men have rendered us valuable assistance, and we confidently hope for aid from England; the least we can do is to restore to you the vessel you so gallantly defended against the revolutionary tyrants of unhappy France."

As La Rochejaquelin could spare a few days, his troops, as was usual with them, having returned to their homes, he resolved to accompany our hero and his betrothed to Rochelle, and messengers were sent to Olone to warn Mr. Fleetwood and the crew of the *Water Witch* to follow them to that town.

In four days the whole party were united. Mr. Fleetwood embraced his daughter with unmitigated delight, and pressing poor Madame D'Arblay's hands, said—

"We will endeavour, my dear madame, to console you for your past misfortunes; you have been a fond mother to my child; we have had a narrow escape from much misery; but I trust God will spare me a few years to see you all settled and happy."

Both Mr. Fleetwood and Claude Tregannon insisted on purchasing the *Water Witch* from the Vendean government, well aware that their funds were very low, and that money was essentially necessary to them to carry out their views.

After much persuasion on the part of Mr. Fleetwood, they agreed to take the sum of four thousand pounds, for which amount Mr. Fleetwood drew upon a well-known London house.

Mr. Seabright and the crew were reinstated, to their infinite joy and surprise, in their old craft, and soon became actively engaged in completing her repairs, and getting her ready for sea.

La Rochejaquelin, having done all that it was in his power to serve Claude Tregannon and the grateful Fanny, bade them farewell with sincere regret, presenting our hero with a pair of splendidly mounted pistols and a Vendée rifle, as tokens of remembrance, to recall to him in after life those whom he left behind, struggling to maintain their ancient freedom and the rights of the old monarchy. Claude

Tregannon could only wish and pray for their ultimate success; and, embracing his gallant friend, who had acted so generously and nobly, they parted, never, alas! to meet again. The fate of the heroic Vendean chiefs is too well known; they fell, but their names will live in history.

Every attention that could be shown by the authorities of Rochelle was offered to our hero and his crew. Many of the ladies of the place called and invited Fanny to their houses, but she declined leaving her friend Madame D'Arblay, whose recent loss and delicate state of health made her prefer perfect retirement.

In ten days the *Water Witch* was ready for sea; and, after a most cordial leave-taking of the mayor and other persons in authority, and many of the first people of the town, the *Water Witch*, with the flag of Old England at her peak, and a fine breeze filling her sails, glided from the harbour of Rochelle, her crew giving three hearty cheers as they passed the Mole, and which was as heartily returned by the numerous persons on the pier.

Fanny stood on the deck, leaning on the arm of her father, gazing, with the tears in her eyes, upon the land they were leaving; they were tears of thankfulness and gratitude, and never, during the long years of her after life, did she ever forget the names of those who had so nobly befriended them.

"Ah, Claude," said the fair girl, her cheek once more regaining its bloom, "never, never can I forget the agony I experienced the morning those horrid commissioners forced us into the calechè to carry us to Paris. Oh, heavens! the horror I experienced! I thought then we were separated for ever in this world; hope was dead in my heart, and despair usurped its place. Dear Claude, can we ever show sufficient gratitude to that Merciful Providence that shielded and protected us through so many difficulties and dangers?"

Claude was almost too happy to speak; he pressed to his heart the little arm that rested upon his, gazed into those fond and beautiful eyes, and shuddered when he thought how near he had been to losing her for ever.

Over the sparkling waters of the Bay of Biscay glided the *Water Witch*, dashing the white foam from her bows, and bending gracefully to the fine breeze that filled her lofty sails.

Tom Starling had many a yarn to spin to satisfy the curiosity of his messmates; he was very proud indeed of his feat of horsemanship, boarding the dragoon, and swamping him, as he termed his exploit.

A very careful look-out was kept, but standing well out to sea, the *Water Witch* ran for the coast of Ireland, and then steered direct for the Land's-end. The fourth day, the coast of old England was seen, and a loud cheer from the crew testified their delight. With a splendid westerly wind, she continued her course up Channel, and nothing occurring to delay or retard her voyage, her anchor was let go, for the first time since leaving Rochelle, off Gravesend.

The next tide she was at anchor off the well-known dock from which the *Surinam* had sailed, just nineteen months and eleven days from the period of their arrival.

CHAPTER XLII.

ONCE again, dear reader, we request you to enter with us into the library of Tregannon House, where, slowly pacing up and down, and deeply meditating, was the usurper, the self-styled Sir James, whose return to England had occasioned great surprise, but no satisfaction to the inhabitants of the county.

It had become universally known that the lost heir was found, and would, ere long, supported by the members of his family, dispute the possession of the Tregannon title and estates: an intense feeling of interest and anxiety was felt by all, coupled with warm wishes for the success of the new claimant, which anxiety increased greatly as the period for his return from India approached. At length, the news arrived in London that the *Surinam* was at anchor in the Downs, and three days afterwards she entered the docks.

The consternation and grief of Mr. Fleetwood was great when, hastening to welcome the voyagers, he learned from Captain Burton that those in whom he was interested had sailed from Calcutta two months before his departure. The disastrous news was imparted to Sir Charles Treacastle, and

every means set in progress to discover what had become of those whose uncertain fate and fortunes were clouding the happiness of so many. Sir Charles and his family lamented for Claude, whilst Mr. Fleetwood wept over the loss of his brother and little Fan.

But if grief and suspense filled the hearts of some, there were others who rejoiced, and a letter, written in great elation of spirits, was despatched by the attorney of Sir James Tregannon to his patron, who smiled a bitter, contemptuous smile as he perused the lawyer's congratulations. He felt no elation, as he gazed round him on the walls and furniture, just as he had remembered them in his youth; he sighed to think how different it was with himself. A life of sin and dissipation had indeed changed him. His hair was grey—almost white, as were his beard and moustaches, whilst large bushy eyebrows almost shaded his dark eyes, from which came no glances but those of malice and revenge. Conscience told him why he had changed, but the conviction did not make him better. He still continued his career of crime, and even in the scene that had aroused the monitor within, whilst pacing to and fro, he plotted other schemes for vengeance, till aroused by the entrance of a servant, who announced the arrival of Mr. Fleeceall.

Sir James gave a slight start, and then said,—

“Show him in here.”

In a few minutes the attorney entered the room, looking, as Sir James thought, rather uneasy.

“What is the matter now, Mr. Fleeceall?” said Sir James; “you seem to have made a hasty journey from London.—Pray sit down.”

“I have made a hasty journey, Sir James,” answered the attorney, “for the intelligence I have gained is better communicated by word of mouth than by letter. News has been received of the missing vessel, in which our opponent, Claude Tregannon, as he styles himself, sailed from India.”

“Ha! and what became of it?” demanded Sir James; “where is it now?”

“It was captured on the coast of France, or near it, and those on board were carried prisoners to Rochelle or Rochefort.”

A gleam of satisfaction shot from the dark eyes of Sir James when he heard this, but he merely remarked,—

“He will be some time before he gets out of that scrape—if ever. In the state France is in, human life is very uncertain.”

“But the worst of it is, Sir James,” continued Mr. Fleeceall, looking anxiously at his employer, “it is said that he has escaped, and will reach England shortly.”

“Why, how could such a report have reached England? Surely he would be as likely to have arrived as the report.”

“It appears not, Sir James; the news was brought to London, and to Mr. Fleetwood by the captain of a small brig, that carried over a cargo of arms for the French insurgents at Rochelle. He heard, while in Rochelle, that an English captain and his crew had purchased the vessel in which they had been captured, and were fitting her out to sail for England. He had no time to ask many questions, for he was preparing to sail, but heard Mr. Fleetwood’s name mentioned; and I feel satisfied,” continued the attorney, “that this English captain must be the said Claude Tregannon.”

“Curse his luck!” muttered Sir James, “happen what will, he is sure to fall on his feet.”

“There is not much cause to dread his return,” observed Mr. Fleeceall, “if,” he hesitated a little, but seeing Sir James’s eyes bent upon him, he continued—“if William Thornback’s demands are settled, and the paper he holds is destroyed—”

Mr. Fleeceall would have given anything to know the contents of the said paper, but William Thornback had merely told him he held a document that if in the possession of Claude Tregannon, would in a moment upset the claims of his client, and the attorney ever since had been puzzling his brains to imagine what it could be—he never for a moment doubted Claude Tregannon being the lawful heir; but that was nothing to him, his business was to prove him an impostor, and he employed some very eminent lawyers on his side, whose business it was likewise to defend the one in possession, whether the other was the real claimant or not; they were aware that the most talented men in the kingdom were opposed to them, but they were

fee-ed high, and the costs of the suit one way or other would be immense.

To return to our worthy attorney. — Sir James, in reply to what he had observed with respect to William Thornback, whom in his heart he detested and abhorred, said, —

“That there was no fear of him, he was daily expecting letters from him and others, which having to come through Holland had not arrived so soon as he had expected. With respect to the six thousand pounds, William Thornback was aware as well as Mr. Fleeceall, that it was impossible to pay it till the Pentoven estates with the large arrears came into his hands.”

“Another extraordinary event I have to relate,” observed the attorney, “and that is the death of Mr. Curtis Bond.”

“So the miser is dead,” quietly remarked Sir James, “who has he left the Grange estate to?”

“That is the most extraordinary part of the intelligence,” answered Mr Fleeceall. “He has left the whole of his very large property to Henry Claude Tregannon, son and heir to the late Sir Henry Claude Tregannon, of Tregannon Park, County Cornwall.”

Sir James became livid with rage.

“Cursed, miserly wretch, what did he mean by such a bequest?”

“It is certainly very singular,” said the attorney; “he has also appointed Sir Charles Trecastle one of his executors. The will also states, that in case of the said Claude Tregannon’s death, his entire estates are to revert to the Crown. Did you, Sir James, ever meet the late Mr. Bond?”

“Yes,” returned Sir James with a smothered execration, “I did. However, this bequest of his will open the eyes of the crown lawyers; they will closely investigate his claims to the Tregannon name and estates, as well as ourselves.”

“I wish I knew,” remarked the attorney, speaking thoughtfully, “the entire proofs they have to bring forward.”

“Why you know the only one I had any fear of,” replied Sir James, is the letter of George Thornback to his

brother William, which was taken from the pocket of William Thornback by——”

Sir James hesitated, as he said—

“By this pretended Claude Tregannon, and handed over to the constable with him at the time. You say that letter or confession, though it may make a great impression when read, a clever lawyer would be able to squash in a moment.”

“Certainly,” said the attorney, “if that was all, it would be of but little importance, for who is to prove that George Thornback really wrote it; it could be said that William Thornback had it written to extort money under false pretences; there is no witness to his brother writing it, no one to prove the handwriting; in point of law, that document is nothing.”

“William Thornback, or Colonel, as he styled himself, is now well known to be an impostor, that he obtained large sums from various persons in the metropolis, by forgery, gambling, and false dice. Do you know of any more important evidence than that, Sir James?”

“I do not; George Thornback and his wife are both dead—Stonehenge either perished at sea or is dead; I have never heard of him or his family from the period of their flight; I do not myself see how my opponent can prove his birth.”

“If,” continued the attorney with a hesitating manner and a half look at Sir James, “I knew minutely the whole transaction from beginning to end, I could clearly see how we stand. Recollect, Sir James, you are playing for a heavy stake; the Tregannon estates are worth fifteen thousand pounds a year, the Pentoven property with arrears is worth one hundred thousand pounds, the mines have been working these eight years, and producing ten thousand pounds per annum, and two other mines were ready to be worked, said to be even more valuable. I pray you let there be no secret between us, let me hear all, that in case of an emergency I may know how to act.”

James Tregannon gazed into the attorney's face with a look that penetrated every thought and idea in the man's brain; but Mr. Fleeccall bore the scrutiny without quailing, because he was sincere and in earnest, for his own interest and future position was at stake.

Sir James was aware that William Thornback had told the attorney a great deal, but evidently not all. He also knew that Mr. Fleeceall was not at all scrupulous; that, like Stonehenge, he would undertake anything for gold; that his reputation was rather tainted, and though he still held his ground in the metropolis amongst his brother attorneys, that his character for probity was none of the best; therefore, after a few moments' consideration, he resolved to go minutely into the past, and state all the particulars of the abduction of Claude Tregannon; so Mr. Fleeceall listened, looking not at all surprised, for judging from what he had heard from William Thornback and his own surmises, he had arrived pretty nearly at the actual facts.

"It was certainly a very aggravating act of the late Baronet," said the attorney, in a kind of apologetic tone, "to marry a second time, and a woman who had lived with him in such a capacity, and thus to cut you off from the title and estates. However, you have them now, and I trust we shall keep you in possession. Claude Tregannon will marry, no doubt, this wealthy heiress, Miss Fleetwood, so he'll be well off, as far as fortune is concerned; but now, Sir James," said the attorney, with a more confident manner, "let me ask you a question or two. Had the child any birthmark? Did you ever hear your uncle, or cousins, or any one speak of such a mark? It sometimes does occur, you know; for after all, this child may be George Thornback's. His dying declaration before witnesses, that he was his son, will come out very strong, and I am not at all convinced in my own mind but that George Thornback might have imposed upon you."

There was a bitter, contemptuous curl on the lip of Sir James as he listened to the cunning attorney, who only said this to gloss over his own conduct in aiding such an imposture. Now James Tregannon knew too well the contrary; but he had told his story, purposely leaving it possible for Mr. Fleeceall to entertain such a supposition. He, however, replied—

"No, I never heard anyone mention a mark of any kind, and except for the strong likeness, I should think it quite possible that George Thornback might have deceived me."

"Ah! likeness may create a sensation, but have no

effect as a point of law," remarked the attorney. "Have you any recollection, Sir James, what became of the child's garments, etc."

"Why, of course," interrupted Sir James, "some were put on the body found, if the drowned child was not Claude Tregannon, some were left in the cave."

"Well, I will not detain you any longer, Sir James," observed Mr. Fleeceall, after some few minutes' thought; "if you will permit me to look over the purchase deed of the Pentoven estate, and one or two other papers of importance, necessary for me to read over, I shall be able to return to London by the mail to-night."

"The chest of deeds and papers relative to that estate is here," said Sir James, and unlocking a cabinet, he took out a key and opened a large chest—part of a bookcase, to all appearance—and told Mr. Fleeceall that whilst he read them over at his leisure, he would order him some refreshment.

Sir James left the library, and proceeded to the drawing-room. As he looked out from the window, he observed the carriage coming up the avenue, and in a few minutes Lady Tregannon entered the room. Great was the contrast presented in the appearance of the husband and wife, the years that had blanched his hair, and left deep furrows in his face, had but transformed the handsome, unformed girl of the Marine Parade into a finished woman of the world. Her sojourn in Paris, and her association with the women of the revolution, had given ease of manner and exterior polish. Her dress was faultless in selection, though somewhat in its style too *abandon* for the sober taste of the English; but the refinement in manner had not been produced by refinement in mind, for her ladyship was haughty, unscrupulous, and reckless. She had acquired great ascendancy over her husband, and entered without hesitation into all his schemes. He had no secrets but one from her. She knew he had stolen the heir of Tregannon, and she was well convinced that Claude was that stolen child; but she did not know the one terrible secret—a secret that poisoned every hour of her husband's life, and made him at times so gloomy and desponding that he gladly plunged into all the excesses and excitements of the revolution to drown thought.

When she entered the drawing-room, Sir James saw in a moment by her countenance that something unusual had occurred: he knew she expected to receive letters at the bankers in Truro, and as she came hastily into the room, her face flushed and her manner somewhat excited, and threw herself into a chair, he said—

“You have received letters from France; something unpleasant has happened, I fear.”

“Worse than unpleasant,” she replied; but who is that man in the library?”

“Oh! only Mr. Fleeceall, my London attorney.”

“Get rid of him, then, as soon as you can; for what I have to read to you is important. I have had two long letters from Madame L——; but there has been a terrible delay in their reaching me.”

“Mr. Fleeceall, no doubt, has finished looking over the papers, and taken the refreshment I ordered him, as he is anxious to return to London to-night. Our cause comes on next week.”

“I tremble to think of it,” observed Lady Tregannon, in a low voice; this letter of Madame L——’s has frightened me.”

Sir James looked startled; for he knew his wife possessed more nerve than himself. In half an hour Mr. Fleeceall had packed up the papers he wanted, hastily swallowed some refreshment, and was riding back to Truro.

“Now, for God’s sake, do not keep me any longer in suspense,” cried Sir James, when he once more found himself alone with his wife.

She had two letters before her, and looked very anxious and sad as she observed—

“There is some transaction,” regarding her husband steadily as she spoke, “that you keep from me, and which will, I fear, in the end, be our ruin. Is it not so?”

Sir James replied at once, though the keen perception of his wife discovered that he answered evasively:

“I told you that I had unfortunately lost a paper that contained words, with my signature attached, that would, if in the hands of the opposing party, totally upset my rights. That paper, I told you, fell into your father’s hands, and thus he obtained his power over me. He allowed himself to be deprived of that paper by George Thornback. and

from him William Thornback obtained its possession. Now do not tantalise me longer, but read those letters; then we will talk more of this cursed paper."

Lady Tregannon took up one of the voluminous packets she had received from France, saying—

"I will read you this first, though it was written many weeks before the other."

We pass over the first part of the letter, which only related to the state of parties in France, the fall of the Girondists, and the triumph of Robespierre and his faction. We now quote Madame L——'s own words:—

"While things were in this state, Colonel D'Arblay was ordered, with his regiment of dragoons, to join General Queteneau in suppressing the insurrection in La Vendée. I intended shortly after to proceed to, and spend some months, at his Chateau Bois-Philibert, which I wished Monsieur de L—— to purchase.

"About three weeks after the departure of D'Arblay, I was surprised by a letter from him, stating that his wife, whom he supposed to be in India, had actually been taken in an English ship, and carried to Rochefort; that she had written to him, stating that she had an English girl under her charge, one of the wealthiest heiresses in England; that she had passed her off as her daughter, to save her from falling into the power of the authorities, and begged him to allow the deception to remain till she could provide for her safety.

"D'Arblay sent a trusty messenger to Rochefort, to inquire into particulars, and take a letter to his wife, requesting her to proceed at once to the Chateau. He also wrote to my sister, who was there, to receive them for a short time, and to appear as the housekeeper. You see, D'Arblay, whose funds were low, intended to turn this young lady into a source of profit, and get a large sum for her release; but the intelligence his messenger gained at Rochefort changed his plans a little.

"It appears that the captured vessel was a yacht, owned and commanded by the very Captain Tregannon you have so often spoken to me about, and in the ship was the young girl's father. D'Arblay told me to find his friend, Monsieur or Captain Thornback, and explain this

to him, and tell him to join him at once; that he would get him a captain's commission in his regiment, and he, knowing everything about these people, would be able to assist him.

"I sent for Thornback, who was glad enough to quit Paris, having got into a broil with Legendre and Marat; so he started at once for La Vendée. And thus, I am forced to conclude what may concern you and Sir James, till I receive further intelligence from La Vendée. Now, how long do you think it will be before you and Sir James will be able to return here? Try and manage to get the ten thousand pounds purchase-money as soon as you can. You will have a splendid bargain of the estate."

After some few remarks more, concerning the state of Paris, the letter concluded.

"What is the date of that letter?" inquired Sir James, anxiously.

"It is dated nearly four weeks previous to the terribly important one I am now going to read you," replied Lady Tregannon.

"Ah! if we had had that letter in time," exclaimed Sir James, bitterly, "I could have crushed this Claude Tregannon's pretensions for ever—but go on. I see I shall have a bold game to play, or else we shall have to fly, beggared, from this cursed country."

"Not beggared, at all events," returned Lady Tregannon, scornfully. "If you have a grain of sense, you can secure twenty or thirty thousand pounds; and that sum in France, if judiciously laid out, will purchase the condemned estate of some aristocrat; but listen—

"All our schemes are knocked on the head," continued Lady Tregannon, quoting from the second letter.

After some violent outbreaks of passion, which it is quite unnecessary to trouble our readers with, she proceeded—

"D'Arblay is dead. I can hardly believe this event as I write it. He was killed in a duel by General Marce—the wretch! his neck shall feel the steel of the guillotine—I swear it. He owed his death to this girl—this 'Demoiselle Fleetwood. Suspecting something wrong, or instigated to

do so by Madame D'Arblay, she contrived to escape from the Chateau. She was pursued by Captain Thornback and D'Arblay's dragoons, overtaken, and fell into his power, when, strange to relate, they encountered a large force of insurgents, and amongst them was this Captain Tregannon, who, it appears from the account I had received, had been released from the prison of Doué, and was actually fighting in the ranks of those rebels, the Vendéans.

"Captain Tregannon, it appears, shot Captain Thornback, and, as I heard, took from him a pocket-book, containing most important papers concerning your husband—one in particular."

A fearful imprecation burst from the lips of Sir James when he heard those words. His cheek grew livid, and his hands, as he clenched them, trembled with passion, as he exclaimed—

"We are ruined! Curse him! if he reaches England, I am crushed—annihilated."

"Do not give way to passion, James," said Lady Tregannon, calmly enough, though her own cheek was very pale; "hear me to the end."

Sir James ground his teeth till even his wife shuddered. She, however, continued—

"One in particular, which you know, Thornback boasted, was worth six thousand pounds to him. This intelligence, which I learned from a person on the spot, was confirmed by a few hasty lines from D'Arblay himself, in which he said—'William Thornback was shot, and plundered of the important papers he always carried about his person. We have recaptured that fugitive girl, but that imbecile, General Marce, took it into his head to take her under his protection; however, I will manage him.' These were the last lines I had from him. A fortnight afterwards, news reached Paris that Colonel D'Arblay had been killed in a duel by General Marce, and that Thouars had surrendered to the Vendean insurgents. From a private source, I also heard that Madame D'Arblay and the English girl had departed from Thouars for Rochelle, where they were to embark for England. These events overwhelm me; the purchase of Chateau Bois-Philibert and the estate has not been completed, for, on investigation, it turns out to revert to Madame D'Arblay by a marriage

settlement; she has, however, been denounced as an aristocrat corresponding with England, therefore her property will be confiscated. Now, *ma chere*, I have communicated all the intelligence I could gain of those strange and untoward events. You know best how they will affect you. Take my advice, should you think the papers taken from Captain Thornback will destroy your husband's claims to the properties he holds, raise all the money you can, and fly to this country."

There was much more in Madame L——'s letter, but not necessary to record.

"Now, James," said Lady Tregannon, laying down the letter, "you know how you are situated. Claude Tregannon may arrive, or, perhaps, has arrived, therefore if you consider the document he has thus strangely gained will destroy your title, be energetic, and gather together all you can, and quit this country before it is too late."

"You are right," replied her husband, rousing himself from the despairing gloom that was pressing with an iron hand upon his heart. He had enjoyed years of impunity, but not happiness; for the crime he had committed—the hour, the time, the circumstance—were all before him; and in the lone hours of the night—that terrible period for those stained with crime, to be restless and sleepless on their couches—the scene of Sir Claude Tregannon's last struggle rose like a dream before him, and his piercing shriek of despair, as he swallowed the deadly poison, rung continually in his ear, and oftentimes fired his brain with the taint of madness.

Did James Tregannon rouse himself for the purpose of repentance? No; he roused himself, and steeled his nerves to commit more crime—if he could—to add to the black catalogue, already filled to overflowing.

The following day, after a long conference with Lady Tregannon, Sir James proceeded to Plymouth, and from thence took the mail to London.

What his projects and schemes were, and what result followed them, will be seen in the sequel.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE arrival of the crew of the *Water Witch* was a source of intense gratification to their connexions and friends. The two brothers Fleetwood embraced each other, shedding tears of joy at their return after long years of separation. Fanny was the happiest of the happy. All her troubles and misfortunes appeared at an end. She was surrounded by friends and relations; her father's health wonderfully restored; her uncle looked younger than ever; her lover happy, and full of hope and joy for the future. She had carefully preserved the important papers, and returned them to our hero, who hastened to place them in the hands of Mr. Saunders. They were opened and read in the presence of Sir Charles Treastle, at Mr. Saunders's; Claude Tregannon's attorney, Mr. Vigors, being also present.

The first was the document the loss of which had occasioned James Tregannon so much misery and vexation.

Our hero was already acquainted with its contents, and many an hour of bitter thought and reflection it had cost him.

It was a sheet of common letter paper, written on both sides. One side contained a letter from the late Sir Henry Claude Tregannon to Sir Charles Treastle, which Mr. Saunders read aloud, as follows:—

“Tregannon, May the 8th, 178—.

“MY DEAR CHARLES,

“This day a terrible misfortune has befallen me. Some wretches, most likely gipsies, have stolen my beloved boy, Claude. He was playing on the lawn with his sisters, and was suddenly missed. I have traversed the country in every direction without success, and am ill and distracted in mind. Lose no time in coming here, that we may renew our search together. You can cause inquiries to be made in your vicinity. If stolen by gipsies, they so stain and alter a child that he might be passed over by a stranger without attracting attention. My poor boy met with an accident a few weeks ago, by thrusting his arm through a pane of glass in the greenhouse. ▲ It has healed, but will,

no doubt, leave a mark for life ; a circle round the arm is visible, just below the left elbow. Send trustworthy persons about your vicinity to search amongst the gipsy tribes, and set out for this as early as you can. I have written this too late to send to-night.

“ Ever yours, affectionately,

“ HENRY CLAUDE TREGANNON.”

But that which appeared so strange and mysterious was the writing on the other side :—

“ Miserable old man, my hour of vengeance has arrived. I told you I would inherit Tregannon, and I will. I stole your boasted heir, to rear him to a life of degradation and shame, such as you, in your pride, condemned me to. Tremble, for your last hour is come.

“ JAMES TREGANNON.”

As this scroll was read, each person present looked the other in the face. Our hero's features were greatly flushed, for he was now convinced that his father had been murdered by James Tregannon.

“ This is very extraordinary,” said Mr. Saunders, laying down the paper. “ By this it appears very evident that James Tregannon intended to take the life of Sir Henry. We have evidence that he entered the house that night, no doubt with the intent to commit this crime ; but why this writing—and on the back of the late Baronet's own letter ? ”

“ We can but surmise,” said Sir Charles Treacastle. “ I remember, as if it were but yesterday, every object that presented itself when I reached Tregannon—for nothing was touched in the late Baronet's room until the coroner arrived. I remember there was a writing-desk on the table, near which sat the Baronet, and there were paper and pens on the desk, as if he had just been writing. It appears to me possible that James Tregannon entered the room whilst he was sleeping, as the evidence of his own attendant proved, under the influence of a narcotic. This letter of my lamented father-in-law's, intended for me, might have been lying on the desk, the sheet written on, turned with the blank side up, and on this James Tregannon, for what purpose I can-

not imagine, wrote those words. At all events, this document clearly proves my brother-in-law's birth and right to the property; he bears the mark still, and you, Mr. Vigors, have Mr. Treestrail's evidence of the accident. Now, let us look at the other papers."

"Ha!" exclaimed Mr. Saunders; "this is a document, signed by James Tregannon, agreeing to give George Thornback the sum of five thousand pounds on his taking the child, and going to America,"

Opening the other paper, it proved to be an agreement between James Tregannon and William Thornback, engaging to give him the sum of six thousand pounds for a certain document in his possession—the six thousand pounds to be paid on his gaining possession of the Pentoven property; they had all dates, signatures, &c.

"With these documents, and the others we possess," said Mr. Saunders, "we may defy all the crown lawyers in Europe to upset our claims. Now, I think, the first step to be taken is to arrest James Tregannon for the murder of his uncle, Sir Henry Claude Tregannon—the villain ought to be brought to judgment."

To this proposition all the party agreed; and, after much more conversation on the subject, they separated, Mr. Saunders proceeded to take the necessary steps for the arrest of James Tregannon.

Our hero spent the remainder of the day at Mr. Fleetwood's, and at a late hour went back to sleep at the Cornish Arms, where he and Sir Charles had sojourned before his departure for India. As he was about to retire to bed, the waiter said,—

"I beg, sir, you will excuse a mistake of the chambermaid, she put a gentleman who arrived late from Devonshire into your room, and he was fast asleep before she discovered her error. However, she has removed your things into the next chamber, and hopes you will pardon the blunder."

"It is of no consequence whatever," said Claude, "in what room I sleep—I am not very particular."

Taking the candle, he proceeded along the gallery, and entered No. 32, his former room being No. 31, and in a very few minutes was in bed and asleep.

It had just struck two o'clock in the morning, and a profound stillness reigned throughout the hotel—even Mr.

Boots had retired for an hour's repose. In No. 45, was a gentleman who arrived the night before, and who gave his name to the waiter as Mr. Jenkins, from South Wales, requesting that any letters for that name should be kept for him. From the period of his arrival he had not stirred out of his room, complaining of having a cold. He had a large handkerchief wrapped round his neck and over his mouth; his head was very grey, though he appeared a tall, strong, hale man; he had neither whiskers nor beard. Two letters came for him the day following his arrival, and about three or four o'clock in the afternoon he walked up and down the corridor, and seeing the chambermaid busy at her occupations, he asked her several unimportant questions, and, in course of conversation, said,—

“That is a very handsome young man who passed along the corridor a short time since. I think I know his face—a Cornish gentleman, I believe?”

“Oh, you mean No. 31. Yes, sir, he is a very handsome young man—his name is Tregannon.”

“Ah, I thought so,” said the stranger. “I have seen him in Cornwall.”

And he passed on to his room. These remarks were remembered afterwards, but not thought of at the time.

The occupier of No. 45, though he passed himself off as a Mr. Jenkins, of Swansea, South Wales, was no other than James Tregannon. On reaching London, he had proceeded to his attorney's, Mr. Fleeceall, and there learned that Claude had arrived the day before. He then made an attempt to get the ten thousand pounds lodged in the bank, by Messrs. Trubill and Co., as security for paying costs of suit, &c. His attorney, however, was much too clever a man of business to trust a client of so slippery a nature as the false baronet. Baffled, furious, and driven to extremities, knowing that he would be utterly ruined, and his life in danger if he awaited the opening of the suit, he conceived, and determined to carry into effect, a scheme of vengeance against him, to whom he attributed, in his wild and perverted brain, all the misfortunes that had befallen him.

At two o'clock in the morning, when all the inmates of the “Cornish Arms,” had retired to rest, Sir James Tregannon was seated at a table, on which was a lighted

candle, a brace of pistols, and a poniard of foreign make, his face, fearfully pale, his dark eyes emitting a wild and sinister glance, his lank grey hair parting his expansive forehead, his teeth firmly set, and his countenance exhibiting all those fearful contortions which are produced by a mind ill at ease. He had the appearance of a maniac, and he had in fact worked himself into a state of feverish insanity; still all his actions were systematically carried out.

Rising from his seat, he put the pistols into his pocket and the poniard in his breast, and took from a portmanteau a small dark lantern, which he lighted, and blew out his candle, after placing a letter, folded and sealed, and directed to Lady Tregannon, in his pocket. Opening his door cautiously, he stepped out into the corridor, and for an instant stood listening, but all was still. He then proceeded, now and then holding his small round light up at the numbers over the doors. At last he stopped before No 31. He trembled from head to foot, his heart beat audibly, while the sound of his teeth grating each other sounded strangely in the stillness that prevailed around. Mastering his emotion, he looked at the lock of the door, the key was on the outside. Placing his hand on the lock, he opened the door without the slightest noise, and entered the room, his dark lantern was turned so that no light was thrown over any of the objects in the chamber; he stood thus for a minute, during which he could hear the hard breathings of the unconscious sleeper.

Approaching the bed, the poniard in one hand, the lantern in the other, he gently opened a small portion of the slide, so that a faint light fell upon the form of the sleeper, who was lying with his back towards the intruder. Cautiously he stepped close up, and so terrible were his emotions that, to keep his teeth from grinding, he bit through his under lip till the blood flowed over his chin.

The collar of the sleeping man was open, and his neck bare; grasping his dagger, James Tregannon aimed one terrible blow at his victim.

With a wild and fearful shriek, that rang through the house, the wounded man started up and turned round, the light fell upon the ghastly face just as the frenzied villain raised his weapon to strike again, but, with a fearful impre-

cation, he saw that he had mistaken his victim ; the face was that of a man of his own age, perhaps older.

Driven to madness by this discovery, the murderer lost all presence of mind. There was a loud noise in the corridor ; instead of shutting his lantern, he opened the slide, and drawing a pistol from his pocket, he turned, with a terrible oath, to the door ; it was burst open, and several persons were running along the corridor, but he who first entered was Claude Tregannon, in his dressing-gown.

The murderer knew him at a glance, and with a yell of triumph he fired his pistol within a yard of him. This time the villain's aim was true, Claude Tregannon received the ball in his breast, staggered forward to seize the wretch, though he did not know him, and then fell senseless on the floor,

With an exulting laugh, James Tregannon, as several persons, with one or two waiters, and the night porter, all half-dressed, rushed into the room, placed the remaining pistol in his mouth and pulled the trigger, and, before a hand could touch him, he fell dead upon the floor.

For several moments the appalling scene held the spectators spell-bound. The reports of the pistols had roused every inmate of that part of the house, and, fortunately, amongst the number a skilful surgeon from Exeter, who instantly recovered his nerve, and kneeling down by Claude, and ordering a light to be held to him, he examined the body, and saw at once that he had received a pistol-ball in the left-breast.

"Lift him up—lift him up carefully," said the surgeon, "he is not dead. That wretch, however, is dead," pointing to James Tregannon, and ordering the porter to run for another surgeon.

He then looked at the unfortunate gentleman in the bed ; he was alive, and although bleeding profusely, his wound was not very serious.

After a careful examination of the wound in Claude's breast, the surgeon found where the ball was lodged, and, with much satisfaction, he declared that it could be easily extracted, and that, as well as he could judge just then, the ball had not touched any vital part.

We will not weary our readers with surgical details, or

relate the confusion and dismay that reigned throughout the hotel during the remainder of that night.

The unfortunate gentleman who was so near losing his life, through the chamber-maid's mistake, remained several weeks under medical treatment.

It was not till after the arrival of Sir Charles Trecastle, in a state of mind not to be described, that the supposed Mr. Jenkins's body was discovered to be that of James Tregannon.

Sir Charles Trecastle, with the surgeon's consent, had his brother-in-law conveyed in a hand litter to his own mansion, where every attention and care that love and devotion could perform, was bestowed upon him. The difficulty was to break the intelligence to Fanny Fleetwood. But Mary, though suffering acutely herself, undertook the painful task, trusting that the opinion of the most eminent surgeon of the day, Sir —, who was at once summoned to attend on Claude Tregannon, and who had declared the wound not mortal, would ease her mind.

The first glance into the beautiful face of Mary Tregannon, though she did all she could to look composed, told a tale to Fanny that caused the blood to desert her cheeks. With an exclamation of great anguish she threw her arms round Mary's neck, pronouncing but the one word—Claude.

Mary, with the tears streaming from her eyes, pressed the devoted girl to her heart, saying—

"There is no danger, on my honour—the surgeon assured us there is no danger whatever of life."

These few words, seemingly so abrupt, so mystified, were the very best Mary could have used. They told the tale that Claude had incurred, in some way, the peril of death, and that, though ill, his life was yet preserved.

Mary felt Fanny's whole frame tremble and quiver, but the next moment, with a heavy sigh, she removed her arms from Mary's neck, and, kissing her fondly, said—

"I ought to bless God, who has given me such a sister to love as you, dear Mary; I am calm now; let me hear what it is that has happened to my poor Claude?" and the tears streamed from her eyes, and her voice trembled with intense emotion; "you must take me to him, for my heart and soul are his—God forgive me; and with him I either live or die."

Mary led her to a seat, and as gently and calmly as she could, told all she knew, for as yet the affair was mystified. Fanny heard her to the end without uttering a word; her cheek was fearfully pale; but rising, she said in a clear, firm voice—

“I must break this intelligence to my dear father; for he already loves Claude as his own child, and the shock will be too great for him, if care be not taken. I will then accompany you home, Mary, and you will not refuse me a share of your couch till Claude recovers.”

Her lips quivered as she said the last words; for though hope was in her heart, she feared her lover was in terrible peril of life.

From joy to sorrow, alas! in this world of ours, how short is often the transition; but so God has ordained it, and so it will be to the end.

We pass over three weeks; for why dwell upon human suffering? At the expiration of that time Claude Tregannon sat on a couch between his sister Mary and Fanny Fleetwood, weak and languid, it is true, but still rapidly recovering the nearly fatal wound he had received.

Much had occurred during those three weeks—the Crown lawyers had a private consultation with those engaged on the part of Claude, and had carefully gone over the papers relative to the pending suit, and seeing that not the slightest doubt existed of Claude's being the rightful heir to the title and estates, abandoned the claim on the part of the crown.

The body of James Tregannon had been privately buried, and no suit in court taking place, much that would have been extremely painful to the family of Tregannon, was spared. Sir Henry Claude Tregannon desired that the wife of his implacable foe should be handsomely provided for; but she had acted for herself. Having disposed of all her jewellery, and got possession of about five thousand pounds in the Truro bank, she quitted Tregannon, and proceeded through Holland into France. Of her after fate nothing was heard.

Six months after these events, Fanny Fleetwood, surrounded by a circle of loving relatives and friends, became Lady Tregannon, and shortly after proceeded to take up her residence at Tregannon Mansion. Madame D'Arblay, upon

whom Mr. Fleetwood settled a handsome annuity, going with her.

As to Tom Starling, he was made independent for life ; but his great pride was having been made Sir Claude Tregannon's coxswain, when he used his yacht the *Water Witch*, and finding that his sweetheart had remained faithful to him in his absence, he made her Mrs. Starling, and settled down on the Tregannon estate in a very neat and pretty cottage Sir Claude had built purposely for him.

As to the Pentoven estate, though Sir Charles Treacastle did all he could to persuade his brother-in-law to accept a share of the profits of the mines, he could not be made to listen to any such proposals, he then at once executed a deed, bestowing upon Sir Charles and his heirs the property for ever.

The marriage of Mary Tregannon was delayed a few months, owing to the Honourable Frederick Delaware having proceeded to the Court of Vienna on a diplomatic mission. On his return, Tregannon House and its vicinity became a scene of great rejoicing upon Mary's becoming the Honourable Mrs. Delaware.

The two brothers Fleetwood closed their mercantile career as soon as they possibly could, and purchased a beautiful property, within a couple of miles of Tregannon Park, where they indeed passed nearly all their time.

If our hero and heroine went through many trials in their early years, they were amply and richly repaid by the felicity that crowned the remainder of their lives, living to see a numerous progeny grow up about them—themselves loved and respected by all classes in the county, and ever ready to lend a helping hand to the virtuous and needy.

Mr. Treestrail was made superintendent of the entire property belonging to Sir Claude Tregannon, and resided chiefly at Grange House, where also Sir Claude and Lady Tregannon spent a month or two every summer, visiting Lyme Regis in their yacht the *Water Witch*.

The faithful Hannah, though made perfectly independent, would not leave her mistress, by whom she was looked upon more as a friend than a dependant.

NOVELS AT ONE SHILLING.

BY CAPTAIN MARRYAT.

Peter Simple.	Newton Forster.	The Phantom Ship.
The King's Own.	Jacob Faithful.	Percival Keene.
Midshipman Easy.	Japhet in Search of a	Valerie.
Rattlin the Reefer.	Father.	Frank Mildmay.
The Pacha of Many	The Dog-Fiend.	Olla Podrida.
Tales.	The Poacher.	Monsieur Violet.

BY J. FENIMORE COOPER.

The Spy.	The Two Admirals.	The Sea Lions.
The Deerslayer.	The Red Rover.	Ned Myers.
The Waterwitch.	The Headsman.	

BY ALEXANDRE DUMAS.

The Three Musketeers.	Nanon ; or, Woman's War.
Twenty Years After.	The Two Dianas.
Doctor Basilus.	The Black Tulip.
The Twin Captains.	The Forty-Five Guardsmen.
Captain Paul.	Taking the Bastille. 2 vols.
Memoirs of a Physician. 2 vols.	Chicot the Jester.
The Queen's Necklace.	The Conspirators.
The Chevalier de Maison Rouge.	Ascanio.
The Countess de Charny.	The Page of the Duke of Savoy.
Monte Cristo. 2 vols.	Isabel of Bavaria.

BY W. H. AINSWORTH.

Windsor Castle.	Guy Fawkes.	Lancashire Witches.
Tower of London.	The Spendthrift.	Ovingdean Grange.
The Miser's Daughter.	James the Second.	St. James's.
Rookwood.	The Star Chamber.	Auriol.
Old St. Paul's.	The Flitch of Bacon.	Jack Sheppard.
Crichton.	Mervyn Clitheroe.	

BY JANE AUSTEN.

Northanger Abbey.	Pride and Prejudice.	Mansfield Park.
Emma.	Sense and Sensibility.	

BY WILLIAM CARLETON.

Jane Sinclair.	Fardorougha.	The Tithe Proctor.
The Clarionet.	The Emigrants.	

BY GERALD GRIFFIN.

The Munster Festivals	The Rivals.	The Colleen Bawn.
-----------------------	-------------	-------------------

Published by George Routledge and Sons.

ROUTLEDGE'S SIXPENNY NOVELS.

(Postage 1d.)

BY J. F. COOPER.

The Waterwitch.	Homeward Bound.	Precaution.
The Pathfinder.	The Two Admirals.	Oak Openings.
The Deerslayer.	Miles Wallingford.	The Heidenmauer.
The Last of the Mohicans.	The Pioneers.	Mark's Reef.
The Pilot.	Wyandotté.	Ned Myers.
The Prairie.	Lionel Lincoln.	Satanstoe.
Eve Effingham.	Afloat and Ashore.	The Borderers.
The Spy.	The Bravo.	Jack Tier.
The Red Rover.	The Sea Lions.	Mercedes.
	The Headsman.	

BY SIR WALTER SCOTT.

Guy Mannering.	The Monastery.	Waverley.
The Antiquary.	Old Mortality.	Quentin Durward.
Ivanhoe.	Peveril of the Peak.	St. Ronan's Well.
The Fortunes of Nigel.	The Heart of Midlothian.	The Abbot.
Rob Roy.	The Bride of Lamermoor.	Legend of Montrose,
Kenilworth.		and The Black Dwarf.
The Pirate.		

SIR WALTER SCOTT'S POETRY.

The Lady of the Lake.	The Lay of the Last Minstrel.
The Lord of the Isles.	The Bridal of Triermain.
Marmion.	Rokeby.

BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Robinson Crusoe.	Artemus Ward, his Book.
Uncle Tom's Cabin. <i>Mrs. Stowe.</i>	A. Ward among the Mormons.
Colleen Bawn. <i>Gerald Griffin.</i>	The Nasby Papers.
The Vicar of Wakefield.	Major Jack Downing.
Sketch Book. <i>Washington Irving.</i>	The Biglow Papers.
Tristram Shandy. <i>Sterne.</i>	Orpheus C. Kerr.
Sentimental Journey. <i>Sterne.</i>	The Wide, Wide World.
The English Opium Eater.	Queechy.
<i>De Quincy.</i>	Gulliver's Travels.
Essays of Elia. <i>Charles Lamb.</i>	The Wandering Jew. (3 vols.)
Roderick Random. <i>Smollett.</i>	The Mysteries of Paris. (3 vols.)
Autocrat of the Breakfast Table.	The Lamplighter.
Tom Jones. 2 vols. <i>Fielding.</i>	Professor at the Breakfast Table.



Published by George Routledge and Sons.

Novels at One Shilling.—Continued.

BY MARIA EDGEWORTH.

Ennui. | Vivian. | The Absentee. | Manceuvring.

AMERICAN HUMOUR.

The Celebrated Jumping Frog. <i>Mark Twain.</i>	The Hoosier Schoolmaster. <i>Edward Eggleston.</i>
The Luck of Roaring Camp. <i>Bret Harte.</i>	Roughing It. <i>Mark Twain.</i>
Truthful James; and other Poems <i>Bret Harte.</i>	The Innocents at Home. <i>Mark Twain.</i>
	Maum Guinez. <i>M. A. Victor.</i>

BY ARTHUR SKETCHLEY.

The Brown Papers. Ditto. Second Series.	Mrs. Brown in the Highlands.
Mrs. Brown at the Sea-side.	Mrs. Brown in London.
Mrs. Brown in America.	Mrs. Brown on the Grand Tour.
Mrs. Brown at the Play.	Mrs. Brown's Olliday Outings.
Mrs. Brown on the Battle of Dorking.	Mrs. Brown on the Alabama Claims.
Mrs. Brown on the Tichborne Case.	Mrs. Brown at the International Exhibition.
Mrs. Brown's Visits to Paris.	Miss Tomkins' Intended. Out for a Holiday.

BY MRS. GORE.

The Royal Favourite. | The Ambassador's Wife.

BY NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE.

The Scarlet Letter. | The House of the Seven Gables.

BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Violet the Danseuse.	Moods. <i>Louisa M. Alcott.</i>
Joe Wilson's Ghost. <i>Banim.</i>	Kindness in Women.
The Old Commodore. <i>Author of "Rattlin the Reefer."</i>	Stories of Waterloo.
Cinq Mars. <i>De Vigny.</i>	My Brother's Wife.
Ladder of Life. <i>A. B. Edwards.</i>	Tom Jones.
Respectable Sinners.	The Vicar of Wakefield.
Henpecked Husband. <i>Lady Scott.</i>	A Seaside Sensation. <i>C. Ross.</i>
Nothing but Money. <i>T. S. Arthur.</i>	A Week with Mossos. <i>Chas. Ross.</i>
Letter-Bag of the Great Western. <i>Sam Slick.</i>	Love Tales. <i>G. H. Kingsley.</i>
The Family Feud. <i>Thos. Cooper.</i>	Turf Frauds.
	Nicholas's Notes.
	Sterne's Works.
	The Tichborne Romance.

Published by George Routledge and Sons.

ROUTLEDGE'S RAILWAY LIBRARY.

(From the "Times.")

Among the most surprising instances of the immense revolution which has taken place of late years in popular literature, are the cheap publications of Messrs. ROUTLEDGE AND SONS, of The Broadway. For several years they have been issuing the "RAILWAY LIBRARY," and have shown an energy and enterprise in many fields of literature almost unparalleled in this country. We believe the great success which they have met with has arisen from the universally popular character of the works which they have issued. Their books are never above and never below the standard of public taste. Looking over their list of books, we cannot but wish the "RAILWAY LIBRARY" a continuation of the immense sale which has hitherto attended it.

THIS SERIES, CONSISTING OF NEARLY 600 NOVELS,
AT 1s. AND 2s. EACH,

Contains the best Works of Fiction by the following popular Authors:—

LORD LYTTON
JAMES GRANT
ALBERT SMITH
HENRY COCKTON
T. SMOLLETT
W. H. MAXWELL
S. RICHARDSON
JANE AUSTEN
W. CARLETON
L. STERNE
MISS FERRIER
MARK TWAIN
BRET HARTE
THOMAS HOOD
CAPTAIN CHAMIER
AMELIA B. EDWARDS
GERALD GRIFFIN
W. H. G. KINGSTON
CAPTAIN MARRYAT
MISS WETHERELL
AUTHOR OF 'WHITEFRIARS'
MRS. CROWE
THEODORE HOOK
W. HARRISON AINSWORTH
MARIA EDGEWORTH
SAMUEL LOVER

EDMUND YATES
JOHN BANIM
JANE PORTER
THE BROTHERS MAYHEW
JOHN LANG
HESBA STRETTON
EUGENE SUE
CHARLES LEVER
FRANK SMEDLEY
ALEXANDRE DUMAS
H. FIELDING
MRS. GORE
G. P. R. JAMES
J. F. COOPER
N. HAWTHORNE
MRS. TROLLOPE
FREDERICK GERSTAECKER
CAPTAIN ARMSTRONG
LADY SCOTT
BALZAC
G. R. GLEIG
JUDGE HALIBURTON
JAMES HANNAY
ANNIE THOMAS
M. M. BELL
LADY CHARLOTTE BURY

AND OTHERS.

LONDON: THE BROADWAY, LUDGATE HILL.
NEW YORK: 416, BROOME STREET.

